FROM THE CREATOR OF *DEADMAN WONDERLAND*

LIVINGSTONE

1

STORY BY
TOMOHIRO MAEKAWA

ART BY
JINSEI KATAOKA

LIVINGSTONE

Story:
Tomohiro Maekawa

Manga:
Jinsei Kataoka

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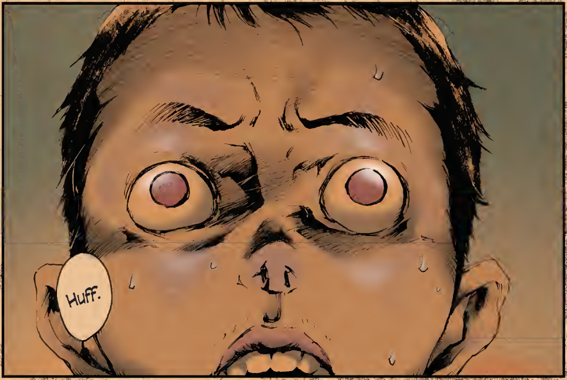
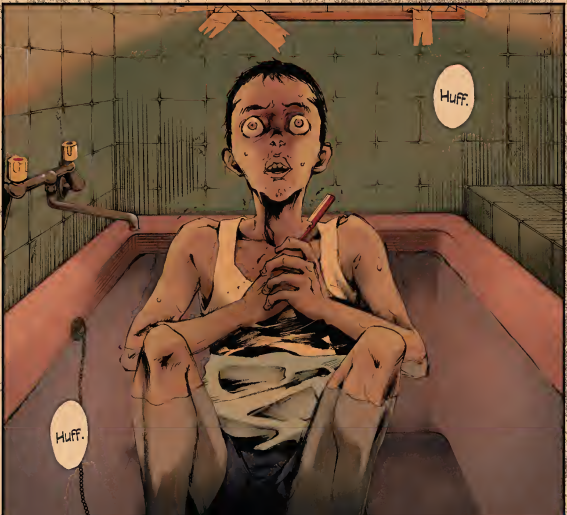
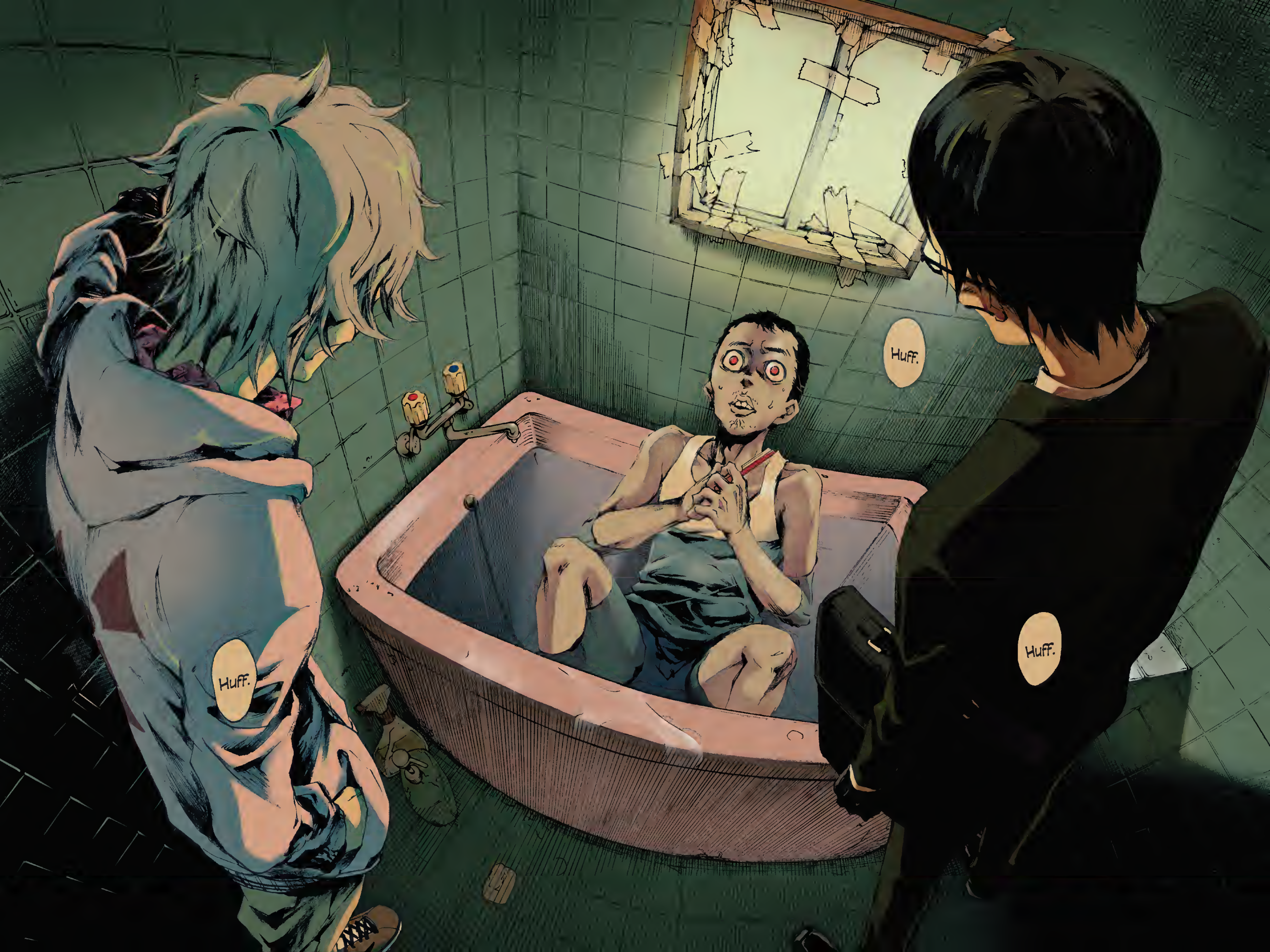
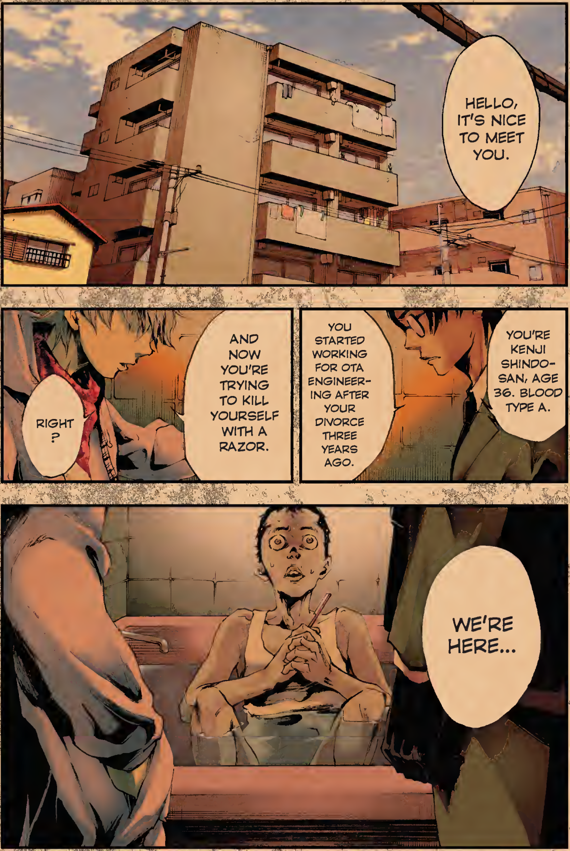
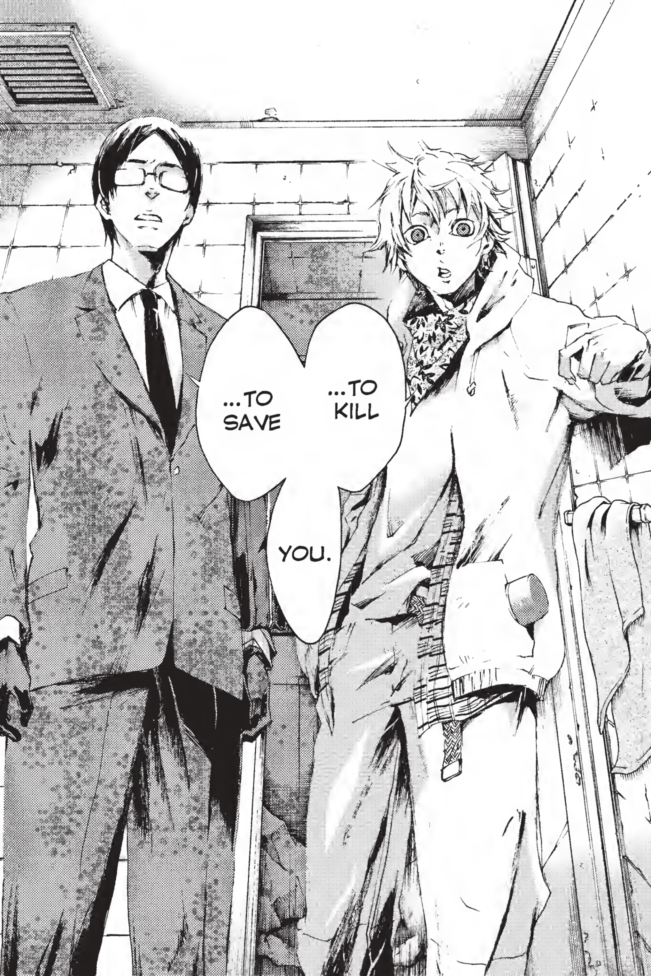
Chapter 1 ✚ Cleaning and Collection

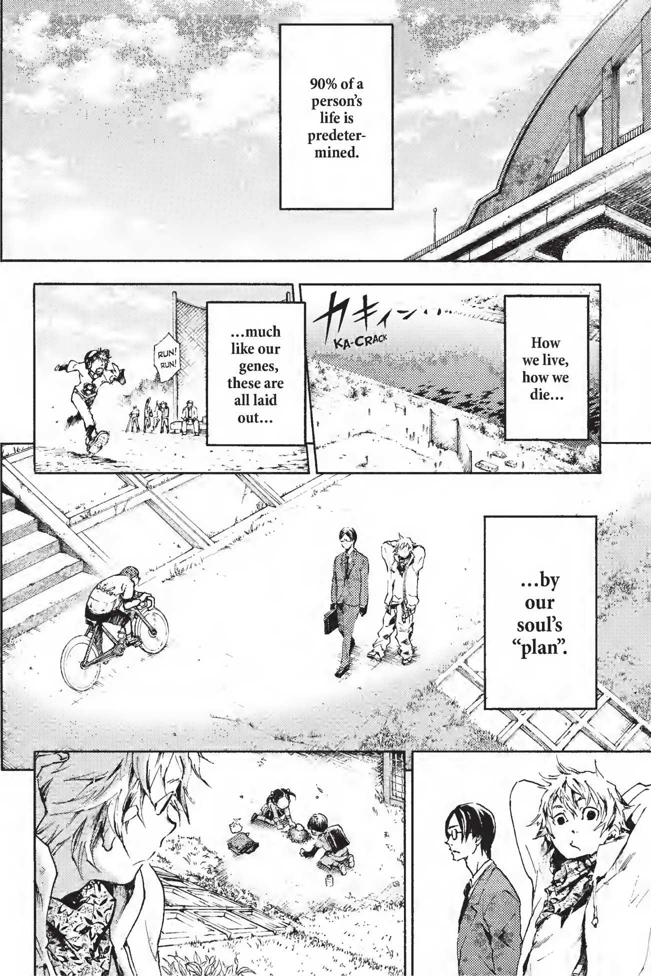

Huff.

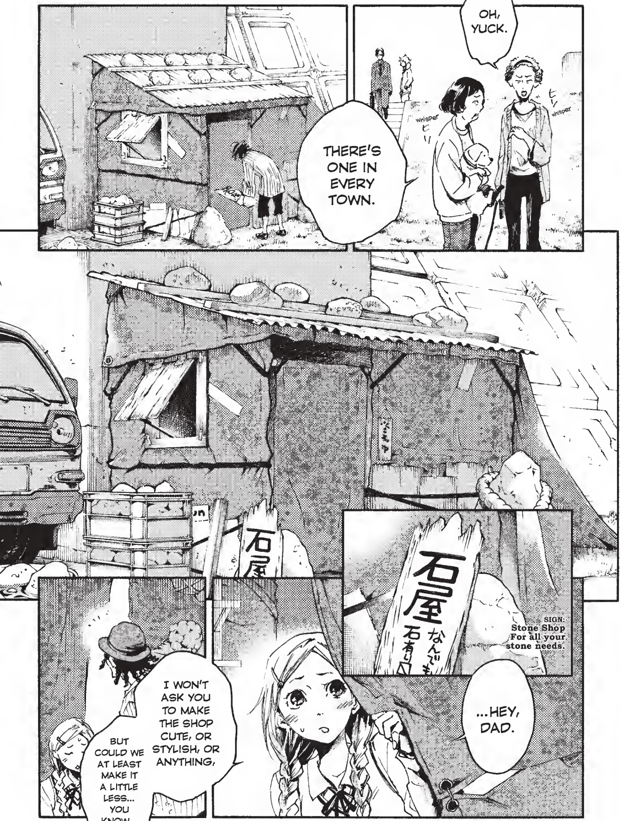

Huff.
Huff.

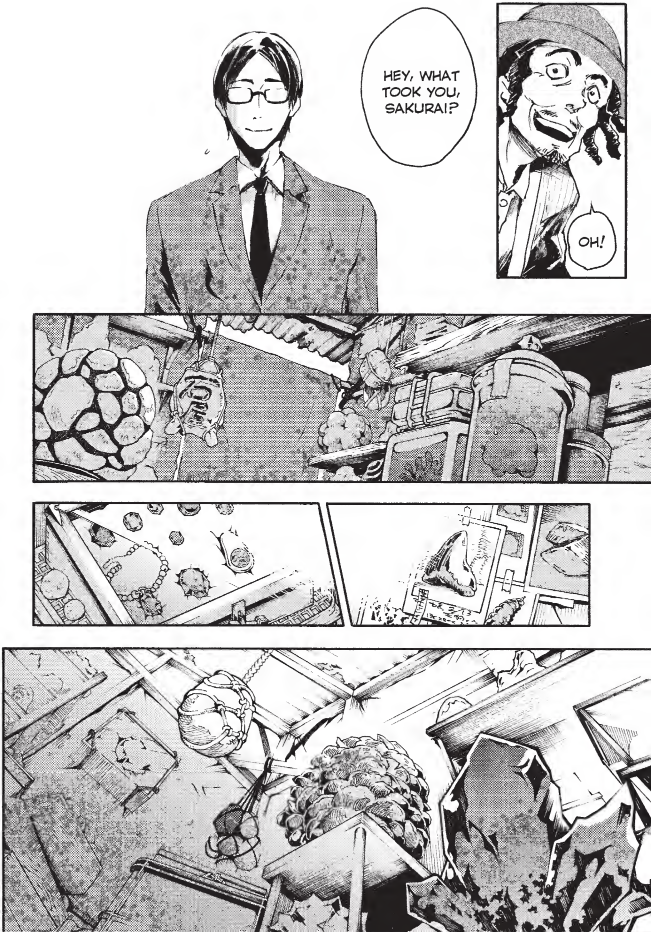

Huff.
Huff.
Huff.

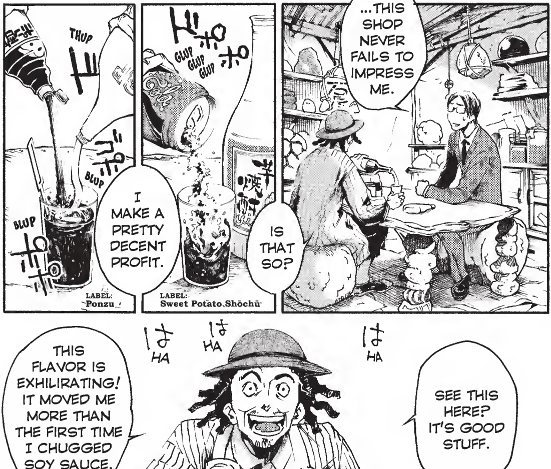

HELLO, IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.
YOU'RE KENJI SHINDO-SAN, AGE 36. BLOOD TYPE A.
YOU STARTED WORKING FOR OTA ENGINEERING AFTER YOUR DIVORCE THREE YEARS AGO.
AND NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL YOURSELF WITH A RAZOR.
RIGHT?
WE'RE HERE...

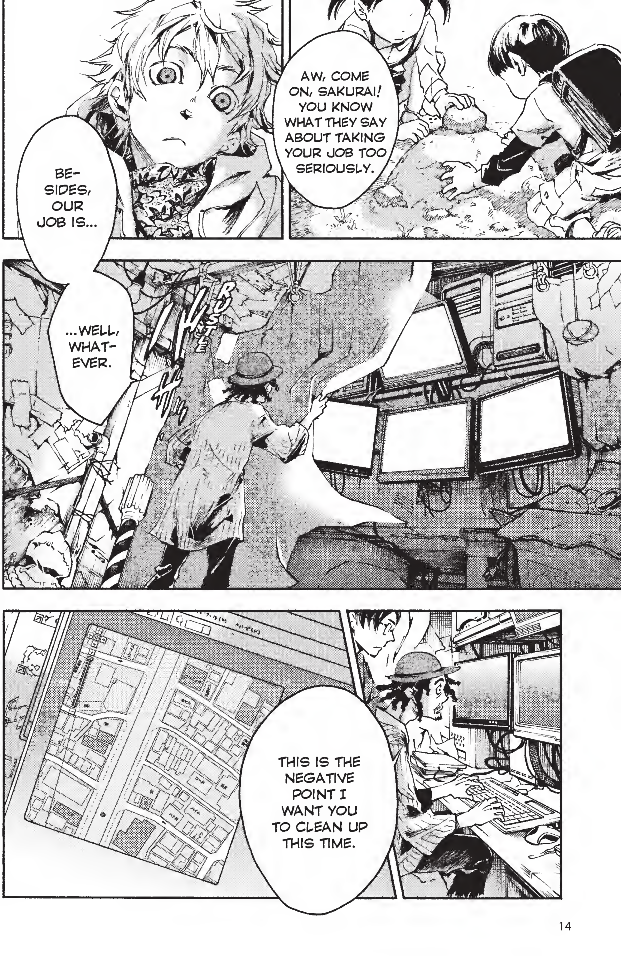

...TO KILL
...TO SAVE
YOU.

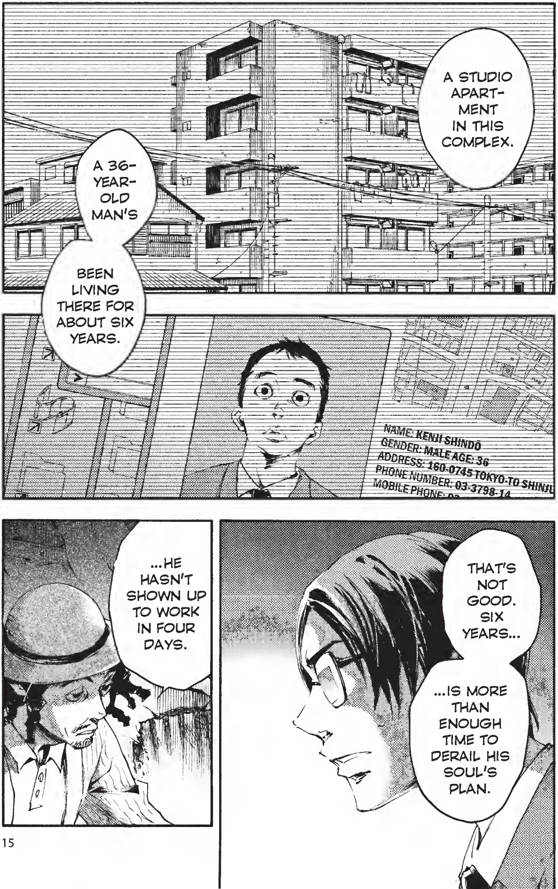

90% of a person's life is predetermined.
カキィーン
KA-CRACK
How we live, how we die...
RUN! RUN!
...much like our genes, these are all laid out...
...by our soul's "plan".

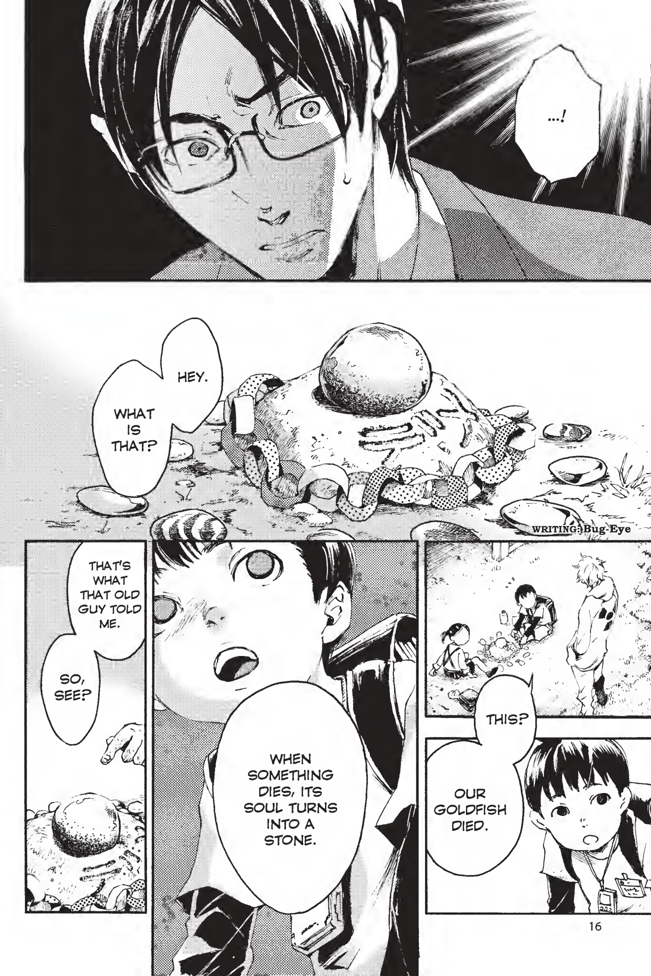

OH, YUCK.
ヒソ whisper
ヒソ whisper
THERE'S ONE IN EVERY TOWN.
石屋
石屋 なんでも 石有り
SIGN: Stone Shop For all your stone needs.
...HEY, DAD.
I WON'T ASK YOU TO MAKE THE SHOP CUTE, OR STYLISH, OR ANYTHING,
BUT COULD WE AT LEAST MAKE IT A LITTLE LESS... YOU KNOW...

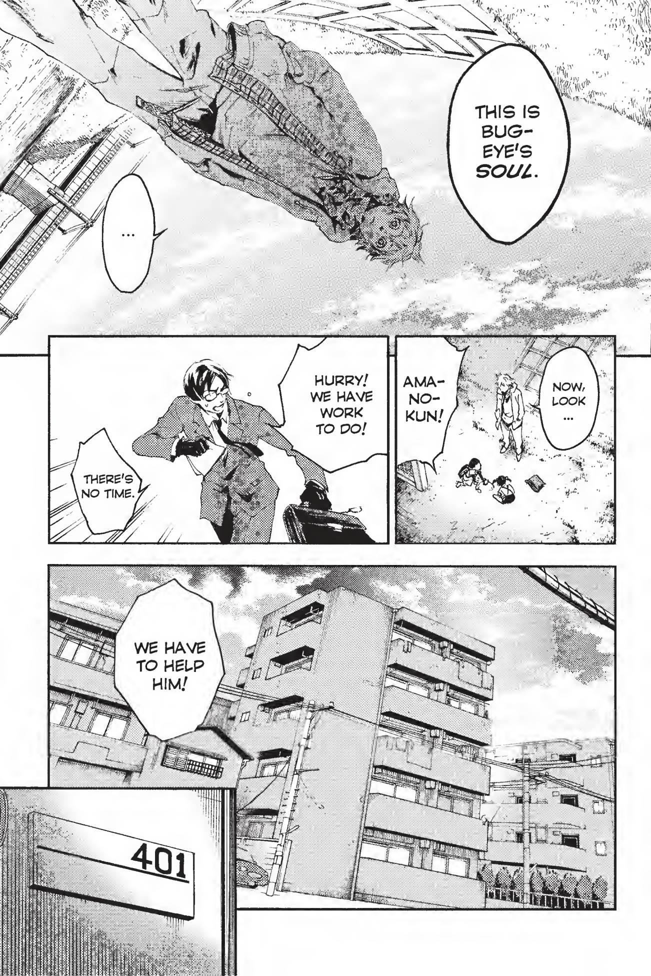

OH!
HEY, WHAT TOOK YOU, SAKURAI!?

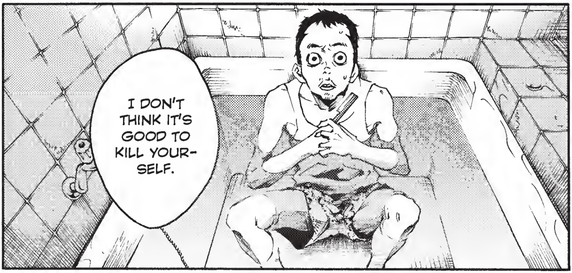

...THIS SHOP NEVER FAILS TO IMPRESS ME.
IS THAT SO?
I MAKE A PRETTY DECENT PROFIT.
GLUP GLUP GLUP
LABEL: Sweet Potato Shōchū
THUP
BLUP
BLUP
LABEL: Ponzu
は HA
は HA
は HA
SEE THIS HERE? IT'S GOOD STUFF.
THIS FLAVOR IS EXHILIRATING! IT MOVED ME MORE THAN THE FIRST TIME I CHUGGED SOY SAUCE.
...UH, NO, THANKS, TOKIEDA-SAN.
I APPRECIATE THE OFFER, BUT... THIS JOB *IS* URGENT, ISN'T IT?

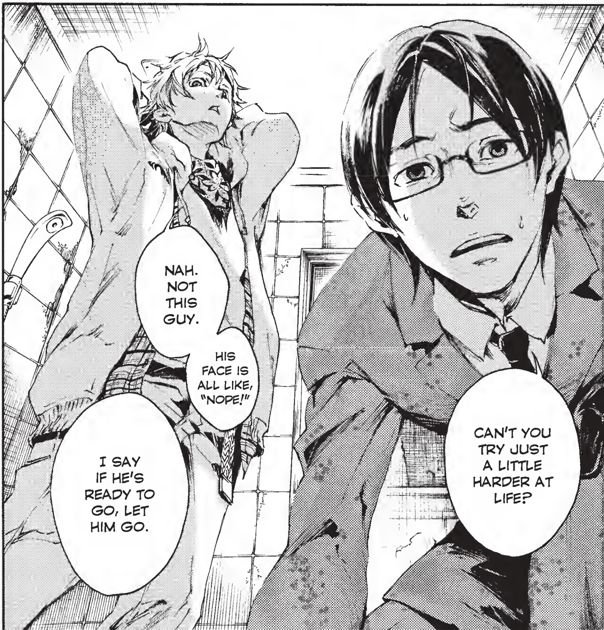

AW, COME ON, SAKURAI! YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT TAKING YOUR JOB TOO SERIOUSLY.
BESIDES, OUR JOB IS...
...WELL, WHATEVER.
RUSTLE
THIS IS THE NEGATIVE POINT I WANT YOU TO CLEAN UP THIS TIME.

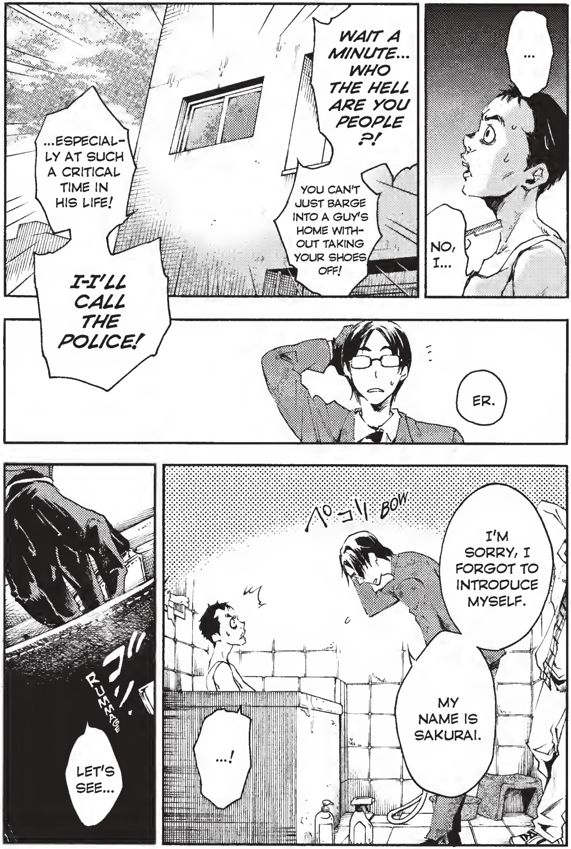

A STUDIO APARTMENT IN THIS COMPLEX.
A 36-YEAR-OLD MAN'S
BEEN LIVING THERE FOR ABOUT SIX YEARS.
NAME: KENJI SHINDŌ
GENDER: MALE AGE: 36
ADDRESS: 160-0745 TOKYO-TO SHINJU
PHONE NUMBER: 03-3798-14
MOBILE PHONE:
...HE HASN'T SHOWN UP TO WORK IN FOUR DAYS.
THAT'S NOT GOOD. SIX YEARS...
...IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME TO DERAIL HIS SOUL'S PLAN.

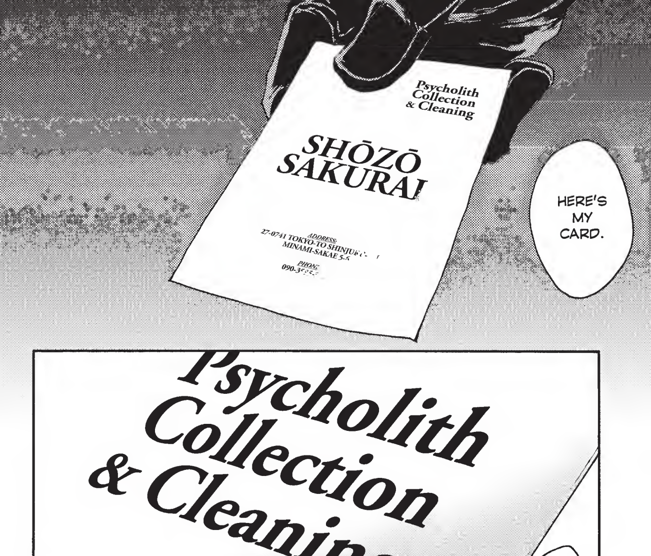

...!
HEY.
WHAT IS THAT?
WRITING: Bug-Eye
THIS?
OUR GOLDFISH DIED.
WHEN SOMETHING DIES, ITS SOUL TURNS INTO A STONE.
THAT'S WHAT THAT OLD GUY TOLD ME.
SO, SEE?

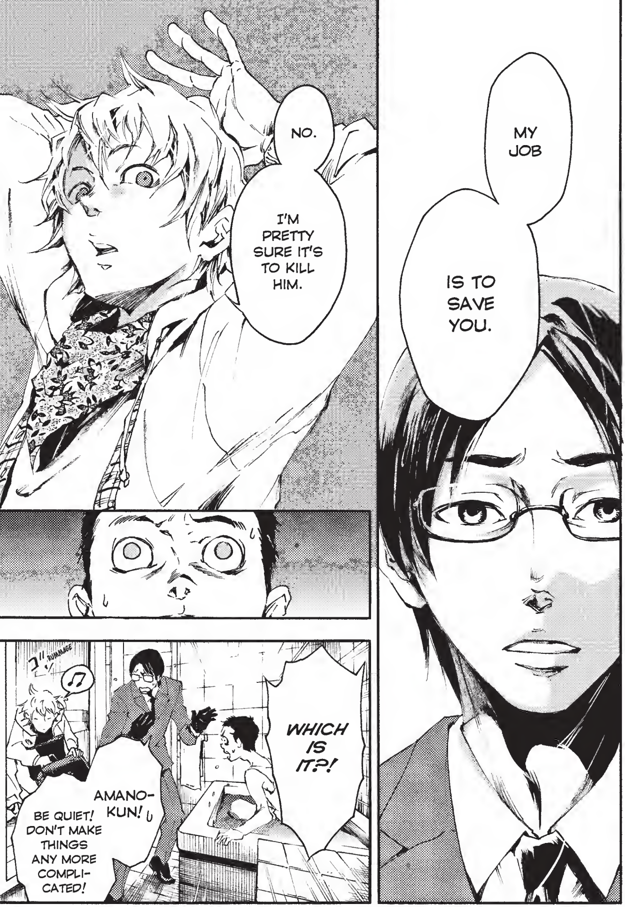

THIS IS BUG-EYE'S *SOUL*.
...
NOW, LOOK ...
AMA-NO-KUN!
HURRY! WE HAVE WORK TO DO!
THERE'S NO TIME.
WE HAVE TO HELP HIM!
401

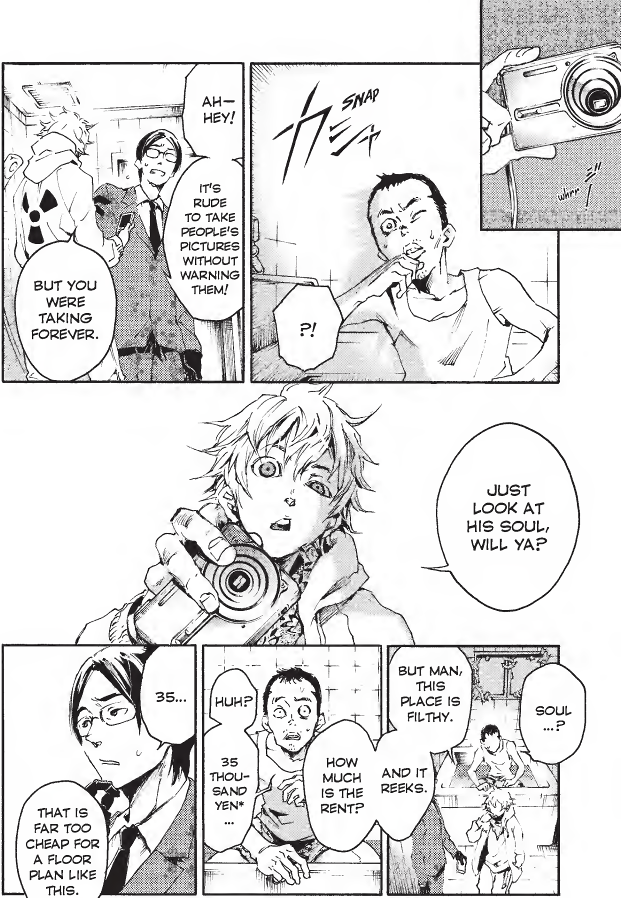

I DON'T THINK IT'S GOOD TO KILL YOURSELF.


CAN'T YOU TRY JUST A LITTLE HARDER AT LIFE?
NAH. NOT THIS GUY.
HIS FACE IS ALL LIKE, "NOPE!"
I SAY IF HE'S READY TO GO, LET HIM GO.

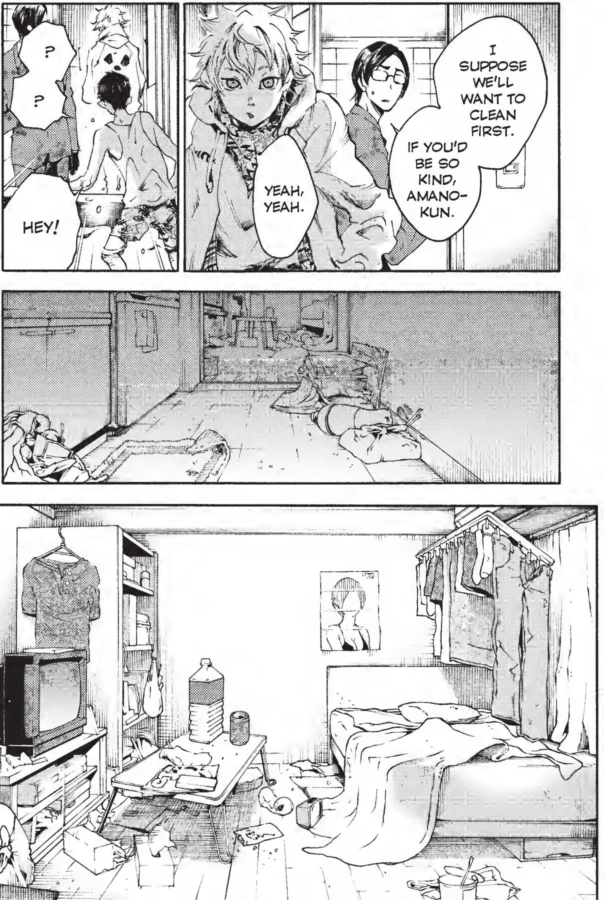

...
NO, I...
WAIT A MINUTE... WHO THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE?!
YOU CAN'T JUST BARGE INTO A GUY'S HOME WITHOUT TAKING YOUR SHOES OFF!
...ESPECIALLY AT SUCH A CRITICAL TIME IN HIS LIFE!
I-I'LL CALL THE POLICE!
ER.
ペコリ BOW
I'M SORRY, I FORGOT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.
MY NAME IS SAKURAI.
...!
ゴソ RUMMAGE
LET'S SEE...

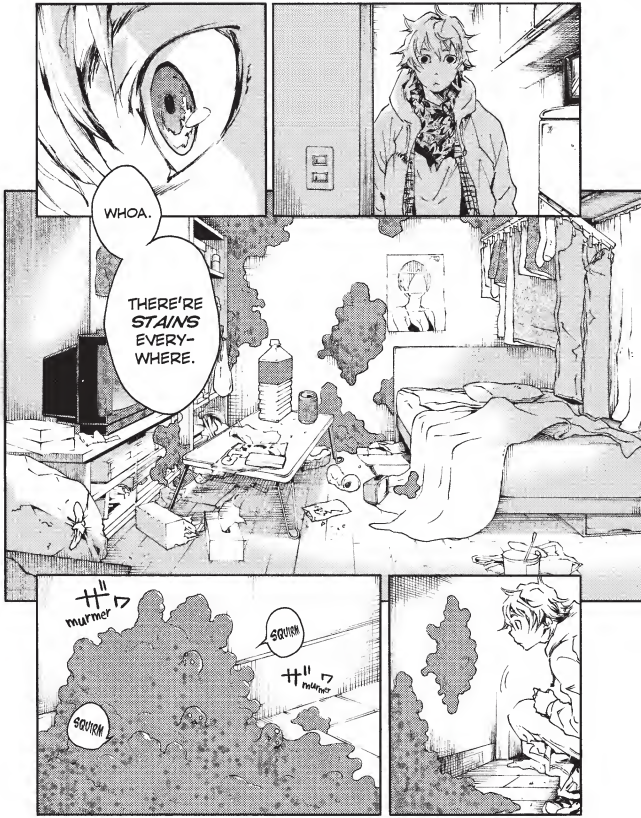

Psycholith Collection & Cleaning
SHŌZŌ SAKURAI
ADDRESS:
27-0741 TOKYO-TO SHINJUK
MINAMI-SAKAE 5-
PHONE:
090-3
HERE'S MY CARD.
Psycholith Collection & Cleaning
...
PSYCHO ...LITH?
IT MEANS "SOUL STONE".
チャプン
splish
SO,
IN SHORT ...

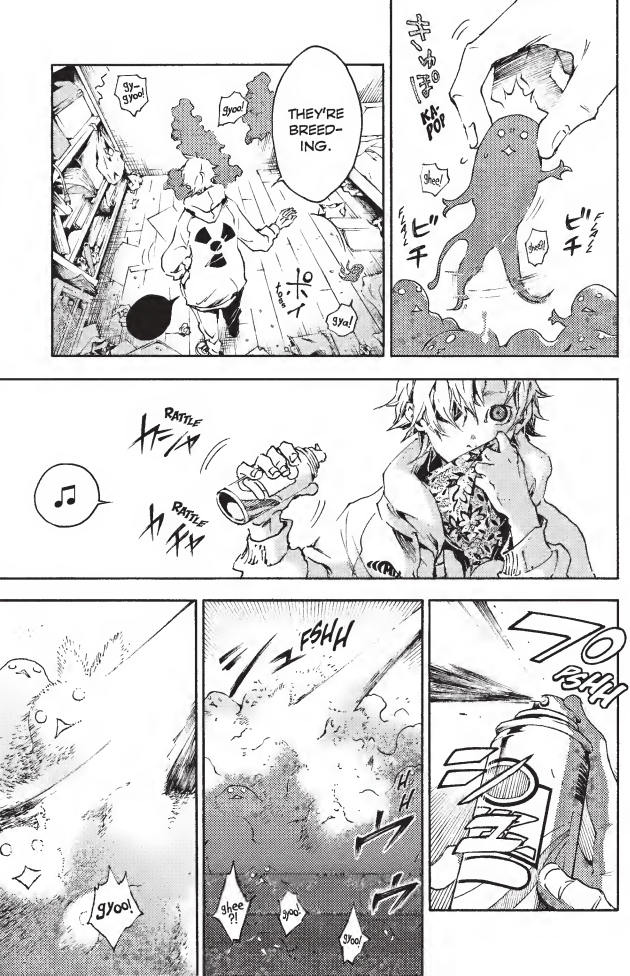

MY JOB
IS TO SAVE YOU.
NO.
I'M PRETTY SURE IT'S TO KILL HIM.
RUMMAGE
WHICH IS IT?!
AMANO-KUN!
BE QUIET! DON'T MAKE THINGS ANY MORE COMPLICATED!

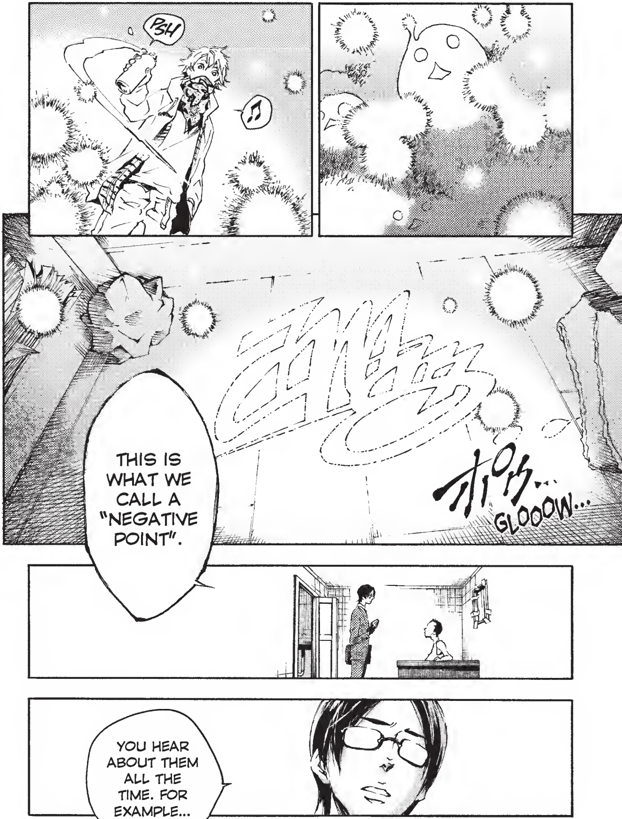

whrr ジ
SNAP カシャ
?!
AH— HEY!
IT'S RUDE TO TAKE PEOPLE'S PICTURES WITHOUT WARNING THEM!
BUT YOU WERE TAKING FOREVER.
JUST LOOK AT HIS SOUL, WILL YA?
SOUL ...?
BUT MAN, THIS PLACE IS FILTHY.
AND IT REEKS.
HOW MUCH IS THE RENT?
HUH?
35 THOUSAND YEN* ...
35...
THAT IS FAR TOO CHEAP FOR A FLOOR PLAN LIKE THIS.

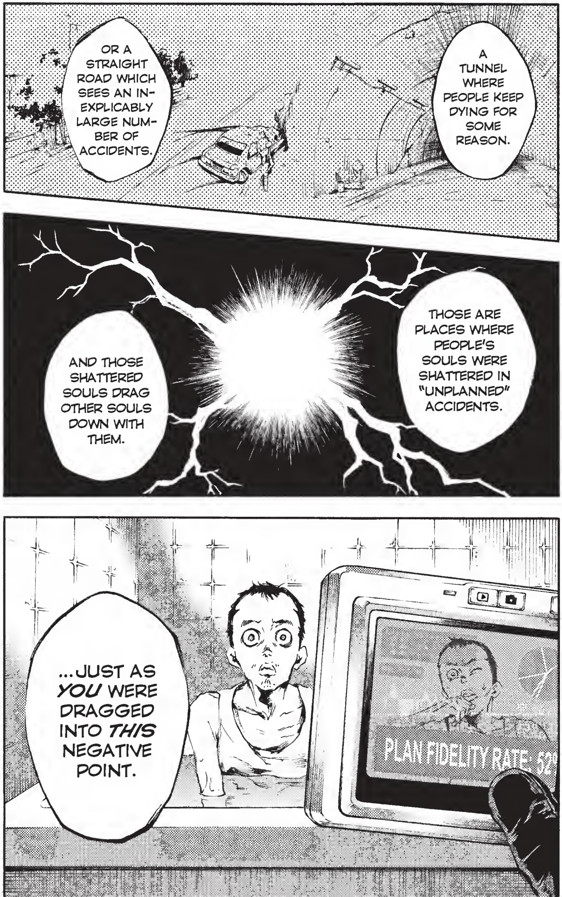
***35,000 Yen = About $350**

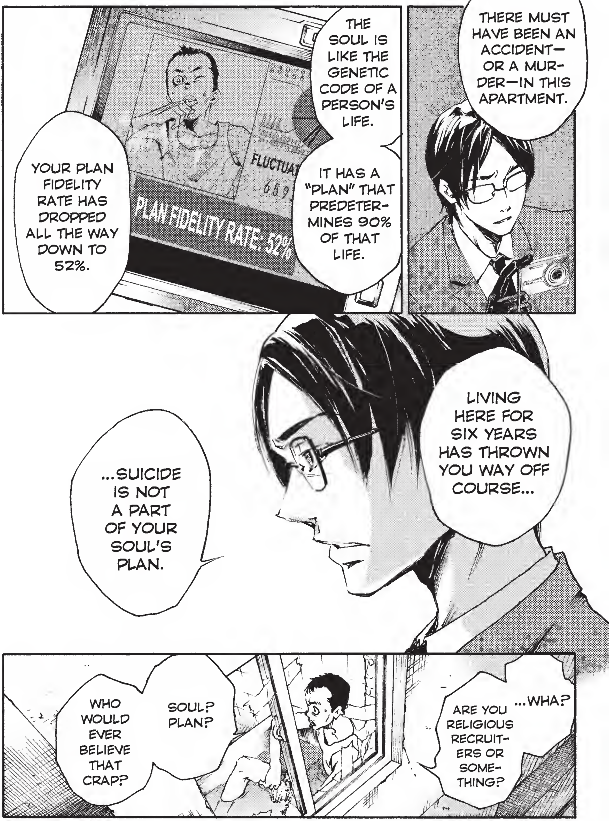

I SUPPOSE WE'LL WANT TO CLEAN FIRST.
IF YOU'D BE SO KIND, AMANO-KUN.
YEAH, YEAH.
?
?
HEY!

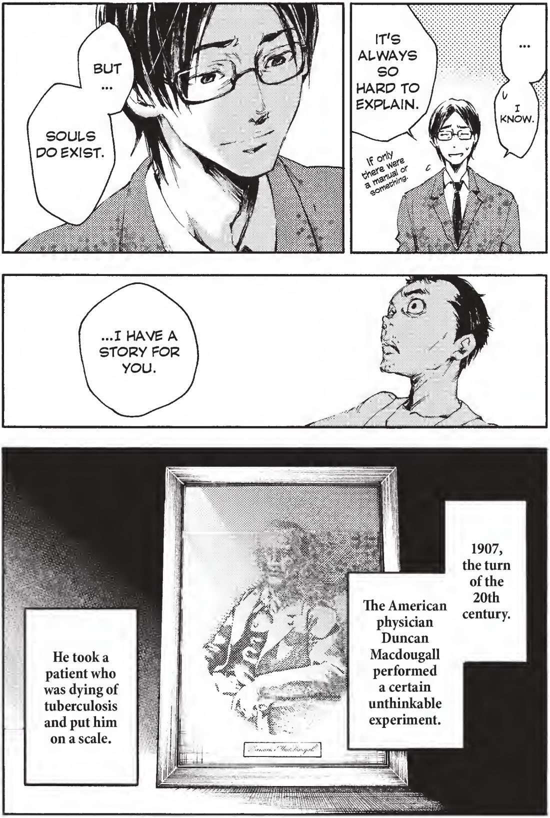

WHOA.
THERE'RE *STAINS* EVERYWHERE.
ザワ murmer
SQUIRM
ザワ murmer
SQUIRM

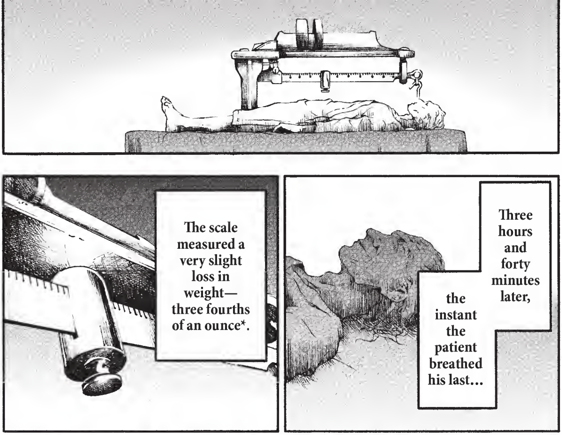

キュポ
KA-POP
ghee!
ビチ
FLAIL
ghee?!
ビチ
FLAIL
THEY'RE BREEDING.
gyoo!
gy-gyoo!
ポイ
toss
gya!
ガシャ
RATTLE
カチャ
RATTLE
♫
PSHH
シュ
FSHH
HHH
ghee?!
gyoo!
gyoo!
gyoo!


PSH
♫
THIS IS WHAT WE CALL A "NEGATIVE POINT".
ホワ…
GLOOOW...
YOU HEAR ABOUT THEM ALL THE TIME. FOR EXAMPLE...

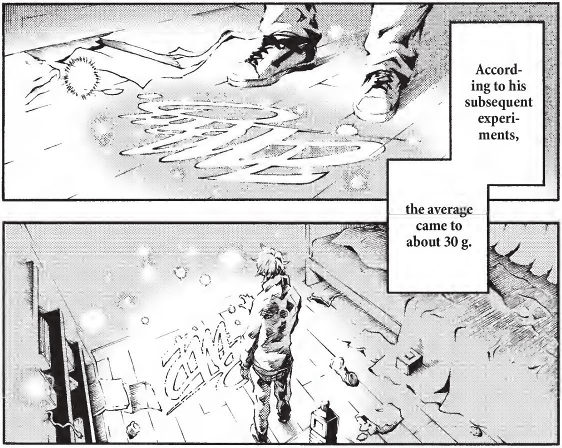

A TUNNEL WHERE PEOPLE KEEP DYING FOR SOME REASON.
OR A STRAIGHT ROAD WHICH SEES AN INEXPLICABLY LARGE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS.
THOSE ARE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE'S SOULS WERE SHATTERED IN "UNPLANNED" ACCIDENTS.
AND THOSE SHATTERED SOULS DRAG OTHER SOULS DOWN WITH THEM.
PLAN FIDELITY RATE: 52
...JUST AS *YOU* WERE DRAGGED INTO *THIS* NEGATIVE POINT.

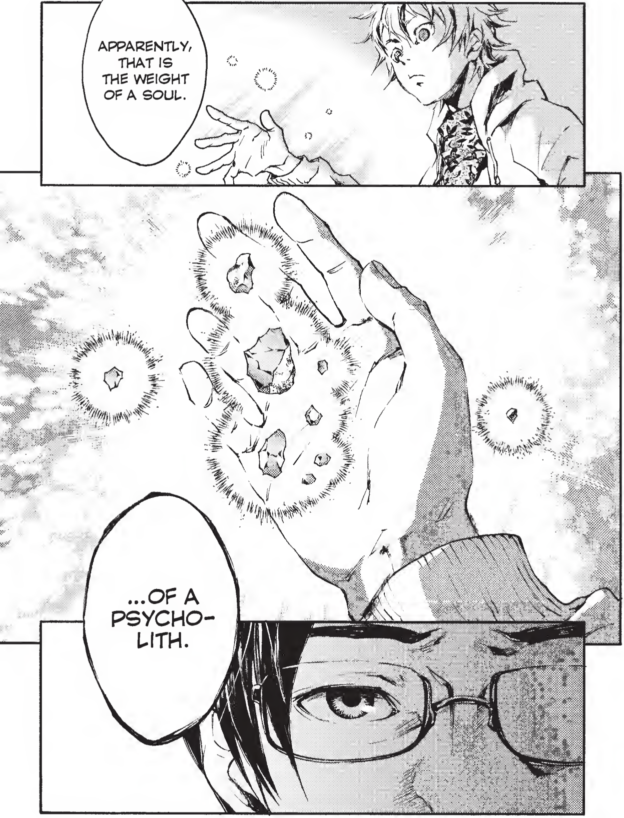

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN AN ACCIDENT—OR A MURDER—IN THIS APARTMENT.
THE SOUL IS LIKE THE GENETIC CODE OF A PERSON'S LIFE.
IT HAS A "PLAN" THAT PREDETERMINES 90% OF THAT LIFE.
YOUR PLAN FIDELITY RATE HAS DROPPED ALL THE WAY DOWN TO 52%.
FLUCTUAT
659
PLAN FIDELITY RATE: 52%
LIVING HERE FOR SIX YEARS HAS THROWN YOU WAY OFF COURSE...
...SUICIDE IS NOT A PART OF YOUR SOUL'S PLAN.
...WHA?
ARE YOU RELIGIOUS RECRUITERS OR SOMETHING?
SOUL? PLAN?
WHO WOULD EVER BELIEVE THAT CRAP?

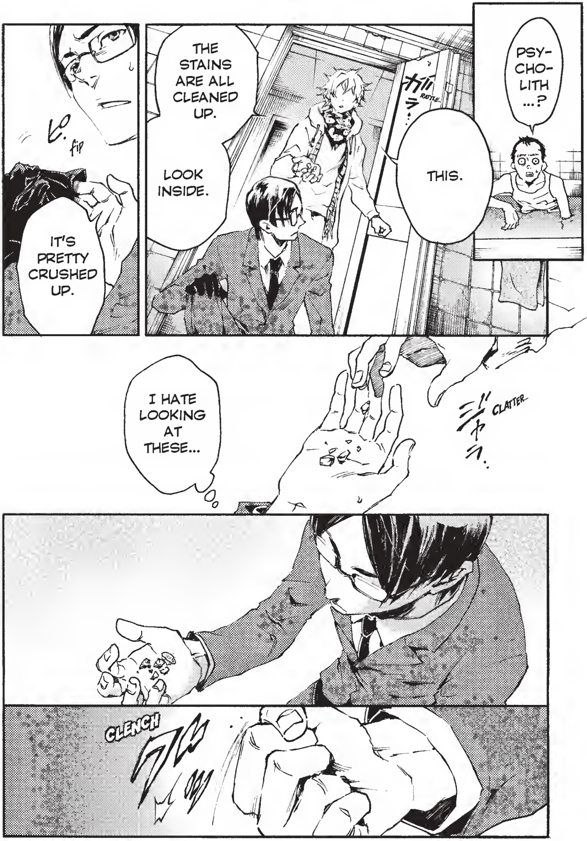

...
I KNOW.
IT'S ALWAYS SO HARD TO EXPLAIN.
If only there were a manual or something.
BUT ...
SOULS DO EXIST.
...I HAVE A STORY FOR YOU.
1907, the turn of the 20th century.
The American physician Duncan Macdougall performed a certain unthinkable experiment.
He took a patient who was dying of tuberculosis and put him on a scale.

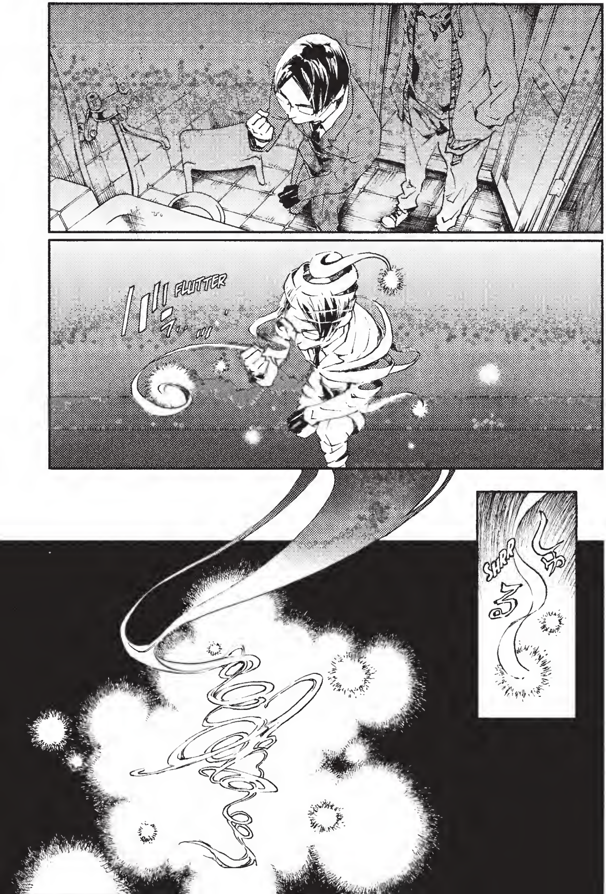

Three hours and forty minutes later,
the instant the patient breathed his last...
The scale measured a very slight loss in weight—three fourths of an ounce*.

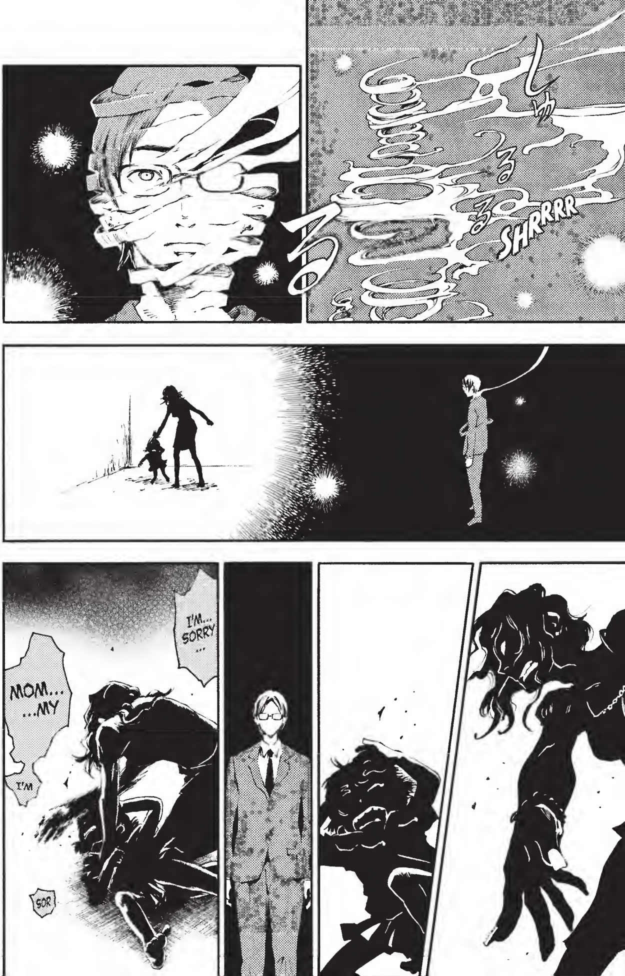
*About 21 g

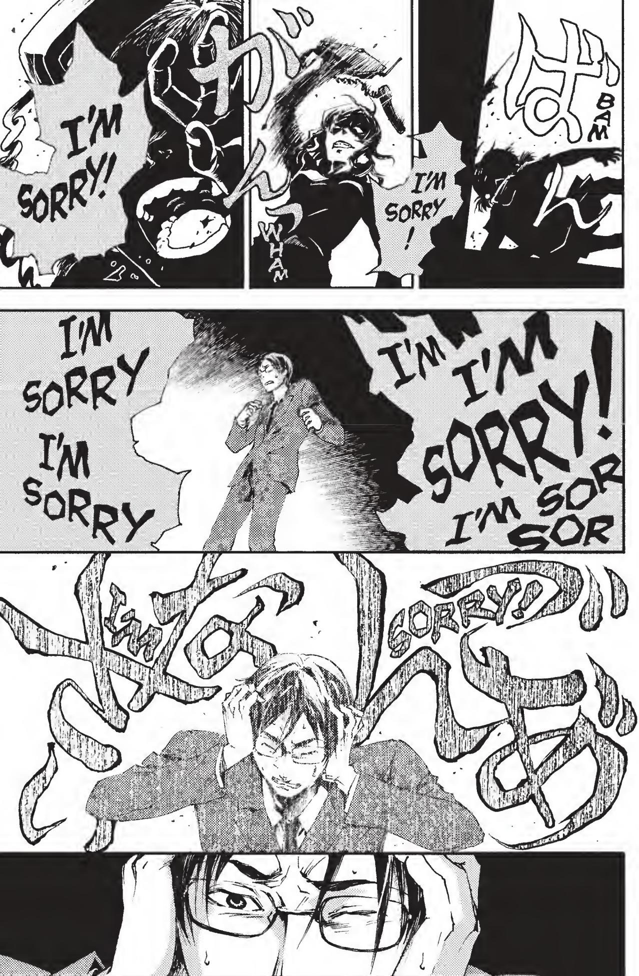

According to his subsequent experiments,
the average came to about 30 g.

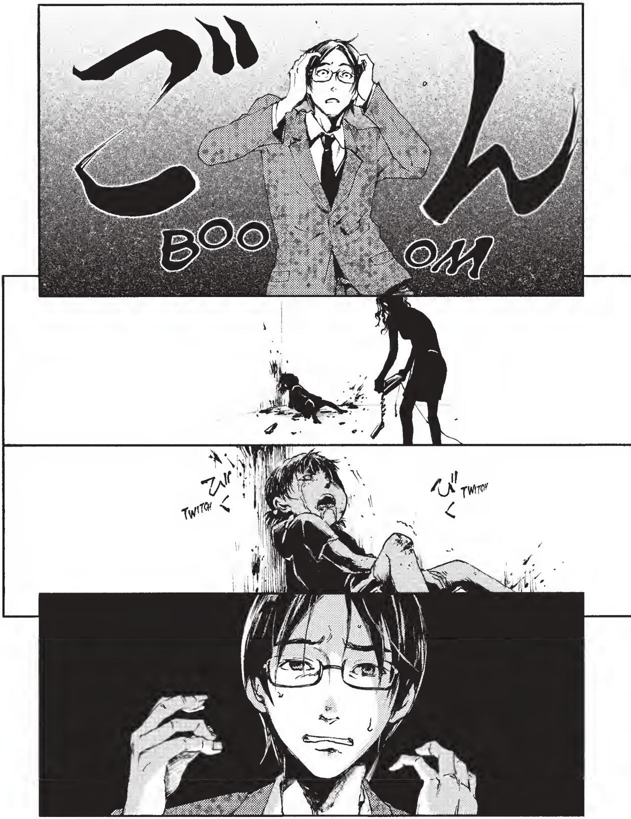

APPARENTLY, THAT IS THE WEIGHT OF A SOUL.
...OF A PSYCHOLITH.

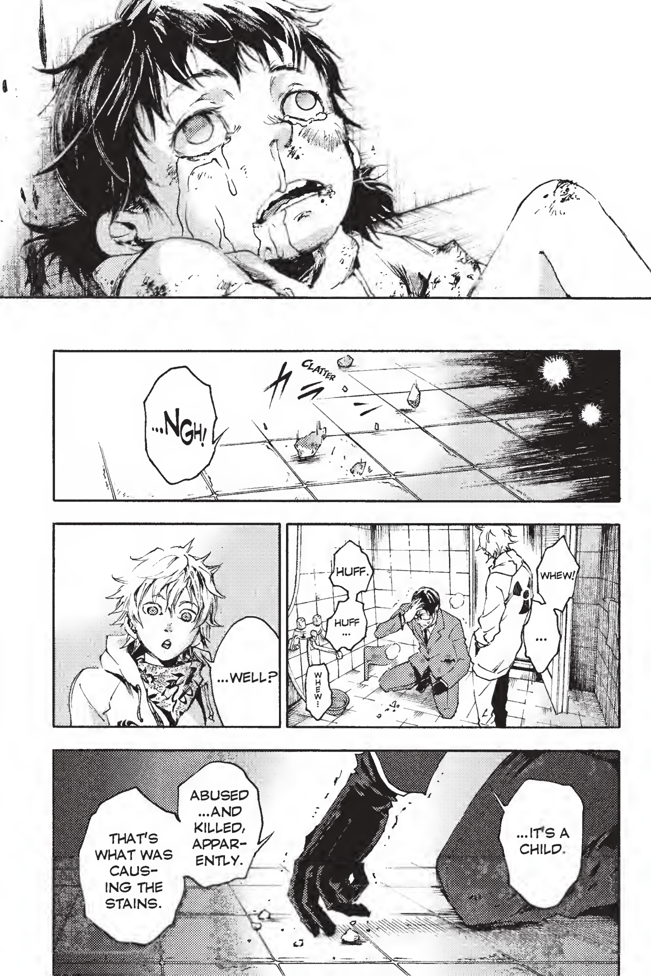

PSY-CHO-LITH ...?
THIS.
ガバ RATTLE...
THE STAINS ARE ALL CLEANED UP.
LOOK INSIDE.
ぴ fip
IT'S PRETTY CRUSHED UP.
ジャラ CLATTER...
I HATE LOOKING AT THESE...
グッ CLENCH

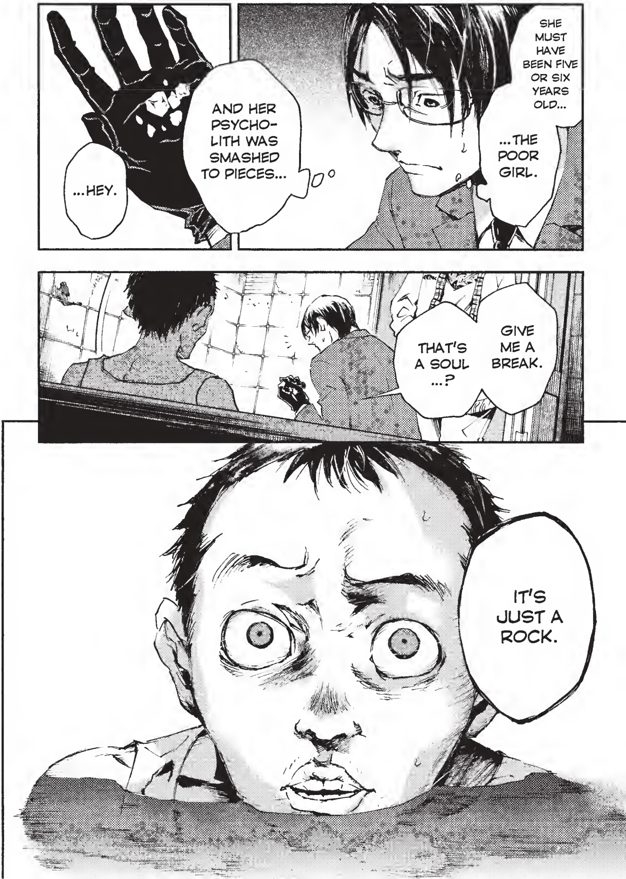

FLUTTER
SHRR
しゅるっ

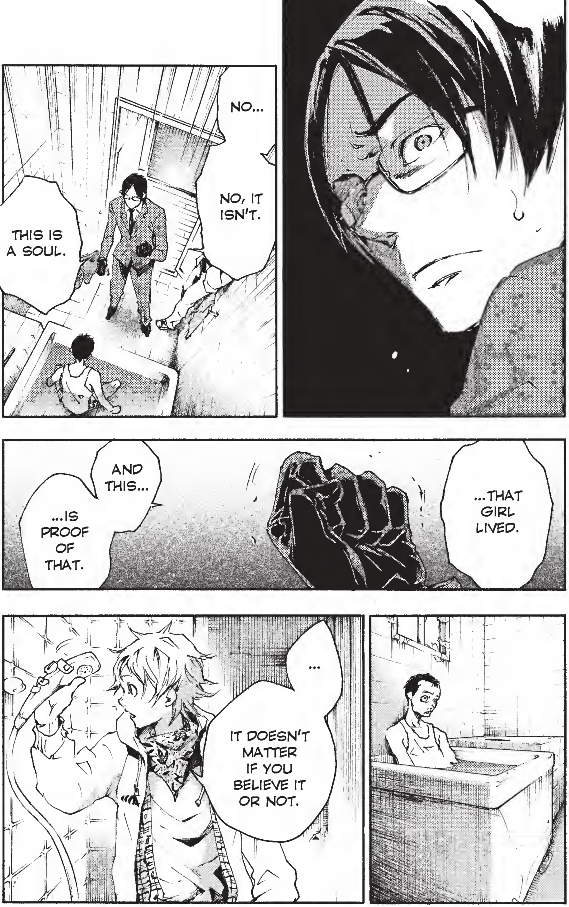

しゅるる
SHRRRR
るる
I'M... SORRY ...
MOM... ...MY
I'M
SOR

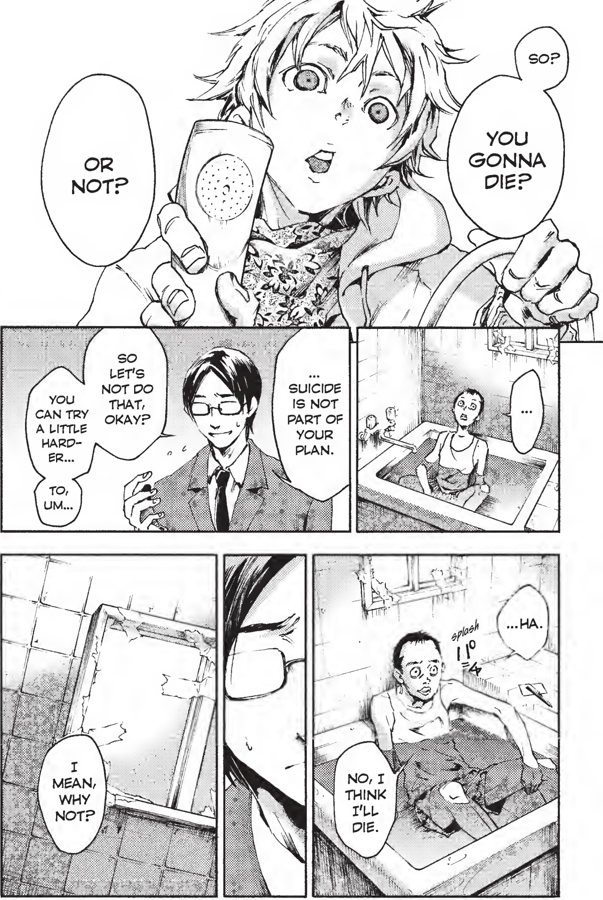

ばん
BAM
I'M SORRY!
がん
WHAM
I'M SORRY!
I'M I'M SORRY! I'M SOR SOR
I'M SORRY I'M SORRY
I'M SORRY!

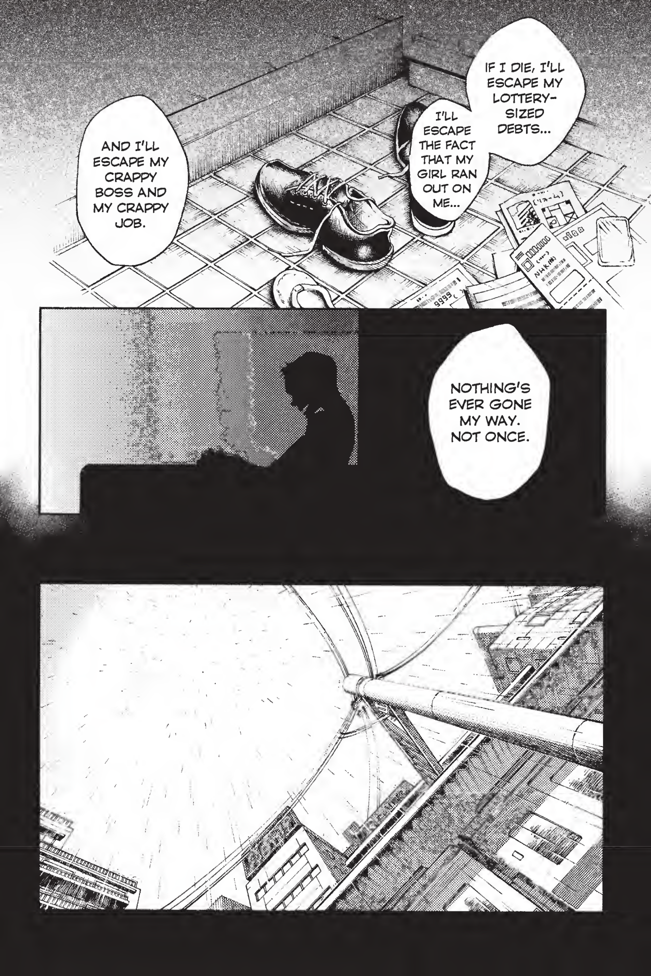

ごん
BOOM
びく
TWITCH
びく
TWITCH

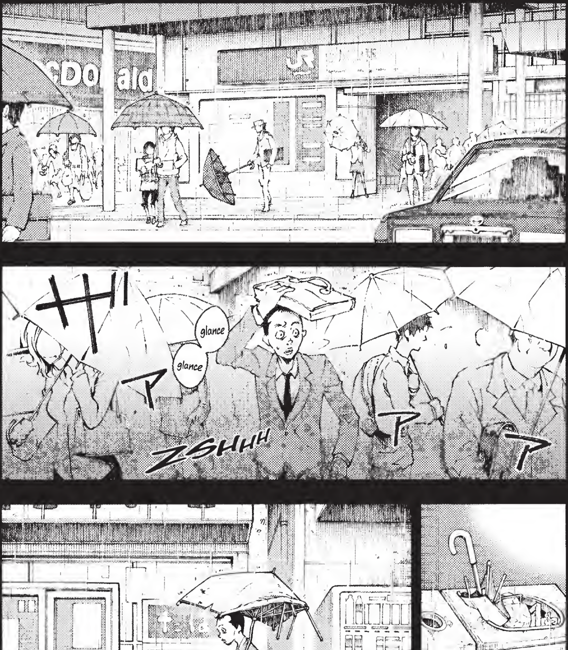

CLATTER
...NGH!
WHEW!
...
HUFF.
HUFF...
WHEW...
...WELL?
...IT'S A CHILD.
ABUSED ...AND KILLED, APPARENTLY.
THAT'S WHAT WAS CAUSING THE STAINS.

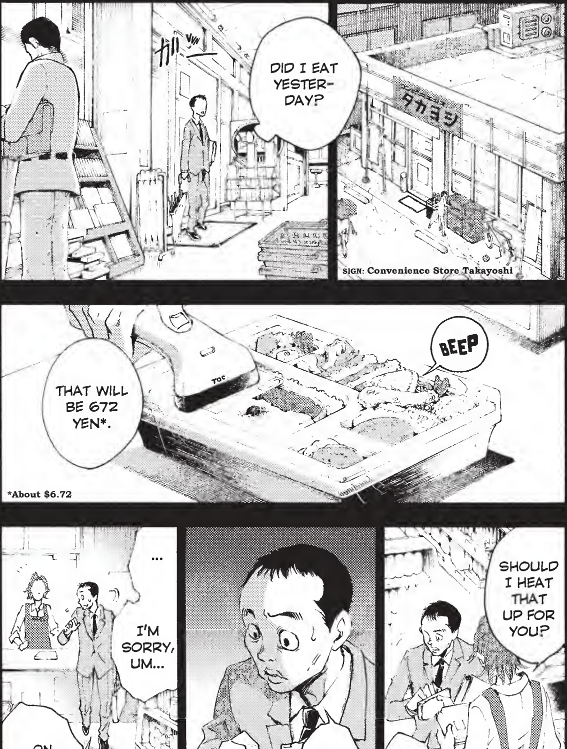

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN FIVE OR SIX YEARS OLD...
...THE POOR GIRL.
AND HER PSYCHOLITH WAS SMASHED TO PIECES...
...HEY.
GIVE ME A BREAK.
THAT'S A SOUL...?
IT'S JUST A ROCK.


NO...
NO, IT ISN'T.
THIS IS A SOUL.
...THAT GIRL LIVED.
AND THIS...
...IS PROOF OF THAT.
...
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU BELIEVE IT OR NOT.


SO?
YOU GONNA DIE?
OR NOT?
...
... SUICIDE IS NOT PART OF YOUR PLAN.
SO LET'S NOT DO THAT, OKAY?
YOU CAN TRY A LITTLE HARDER...
TO, UM...
...HA.
splash
NO, I THINK I'LL DIE.
I MEAN, WHY NOT?

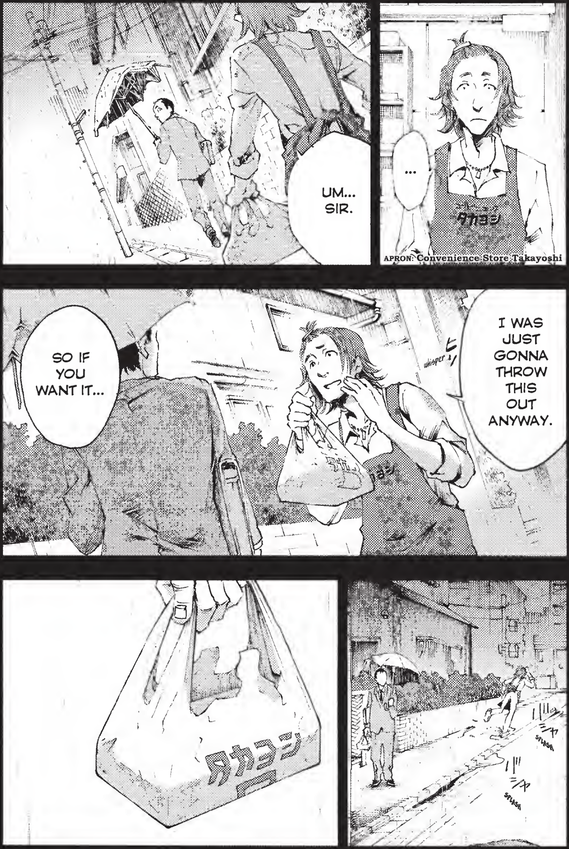

IF I DIE, I'LL ESCAPE MY LOTTERY-SIZED DEBTS...
I'LL ESCAPE THE FACT THAT MY GIRL RAN OUT ON ME...
AND I'LL ESCAPE MY CRAPPY BOSS AND MY CRAPPY JOB.
NOTHING'S EVER GONE MY WAY. NOT ONCE.


cDOnald
JR
glance
glance
ZSHHH
MAN,
I'M HUNGRY.


タカヨシ
ガー
VVN
DID I EAT YESTERDAY?
BEEP
THAT WILL BE 672 YEN*.
SHOULD I HEAT THAT UP FOR YOU?
UH... YEAH.
...
...
I'M SORRY, UM...
ON SECOND THOUGHT, DON'T BOTHER.

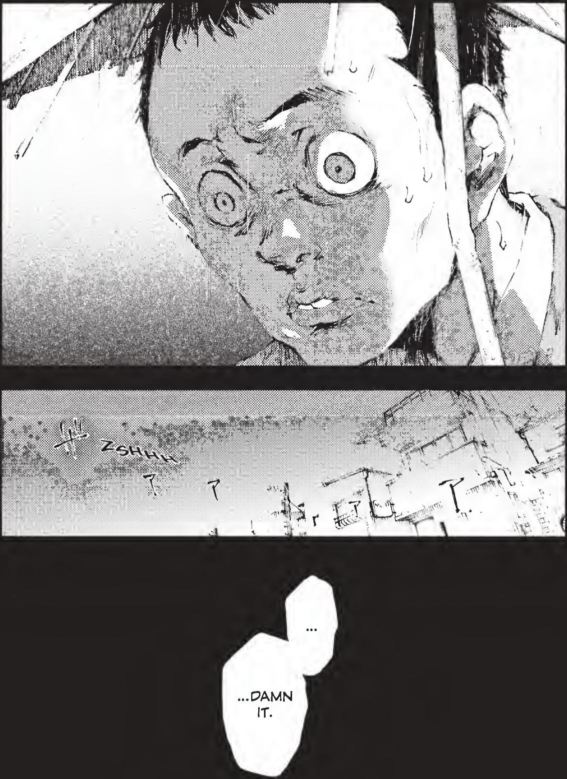
SIGN: Convenience Store Takayoshi

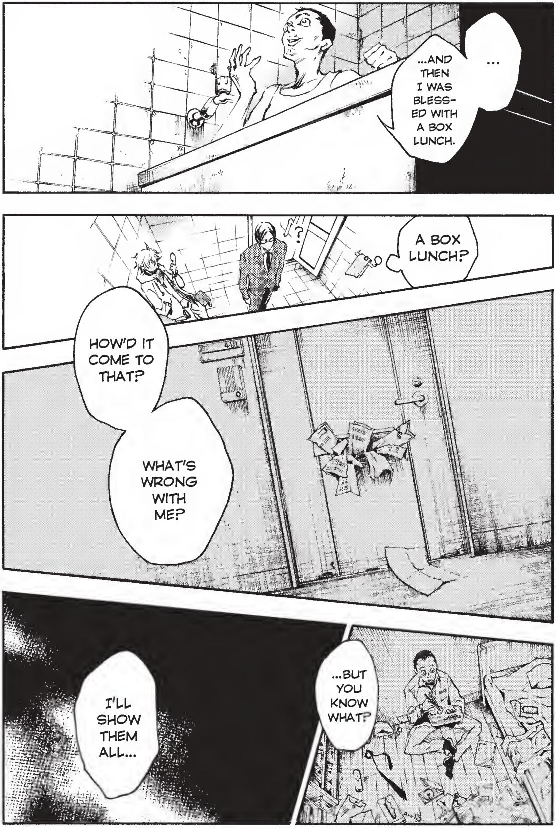
*About $6.72

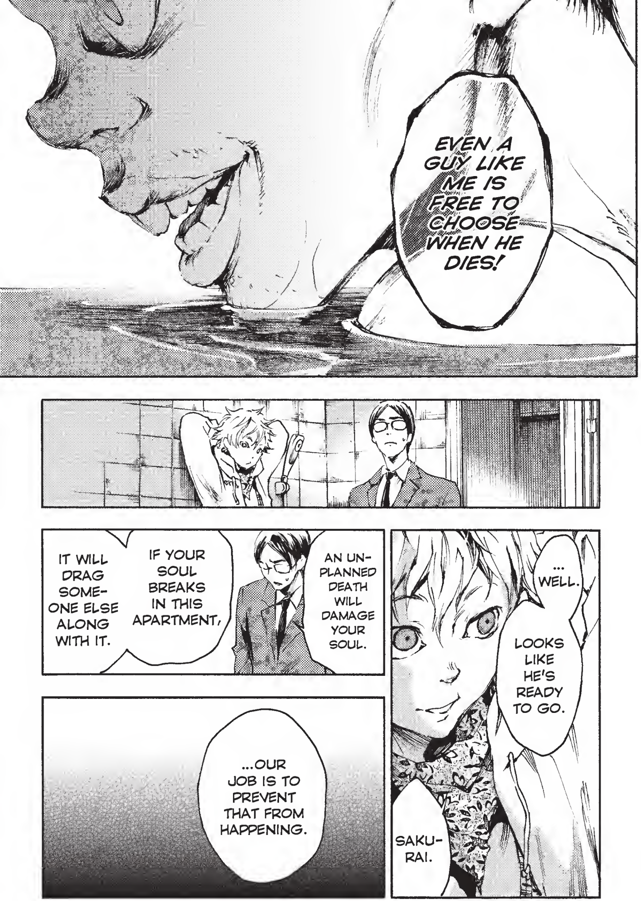


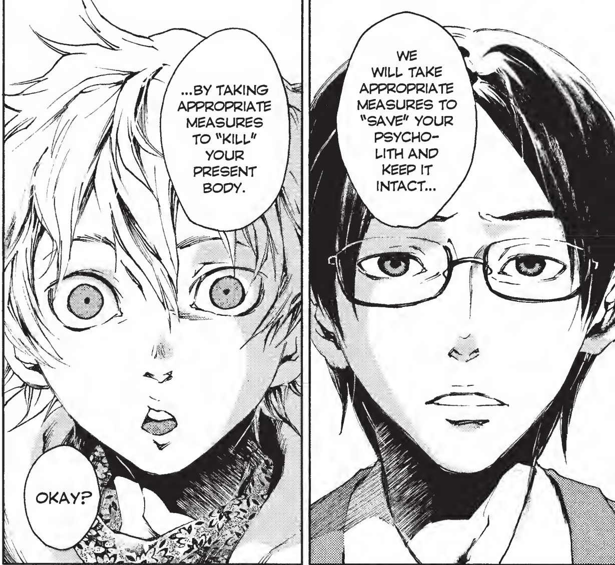
APRON: Convenience Store Takayoshi

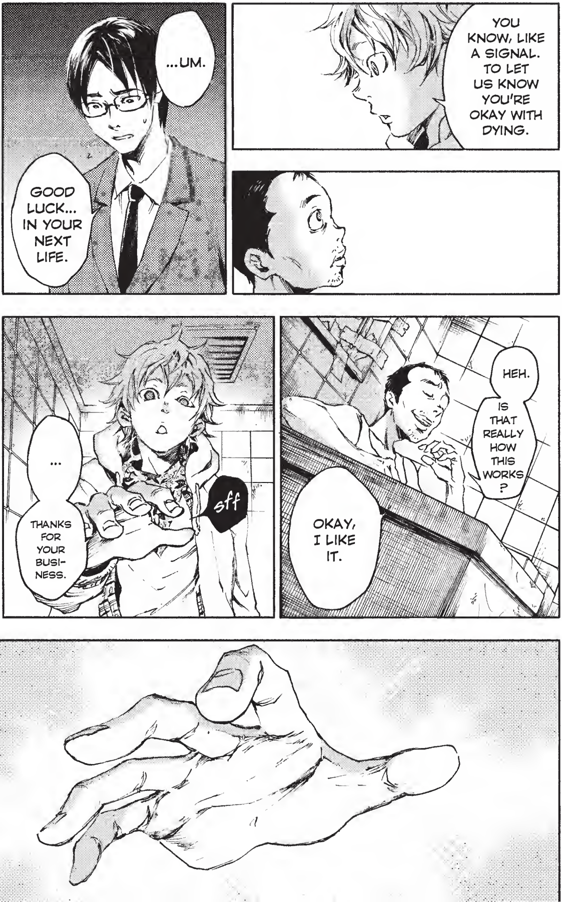
...
UM... SIR.
I WAS JUST GONNA THROW THIS OUT ANYWAY.
whisper
SO IF YOU WANT IT...
SPLASH
SPLASH

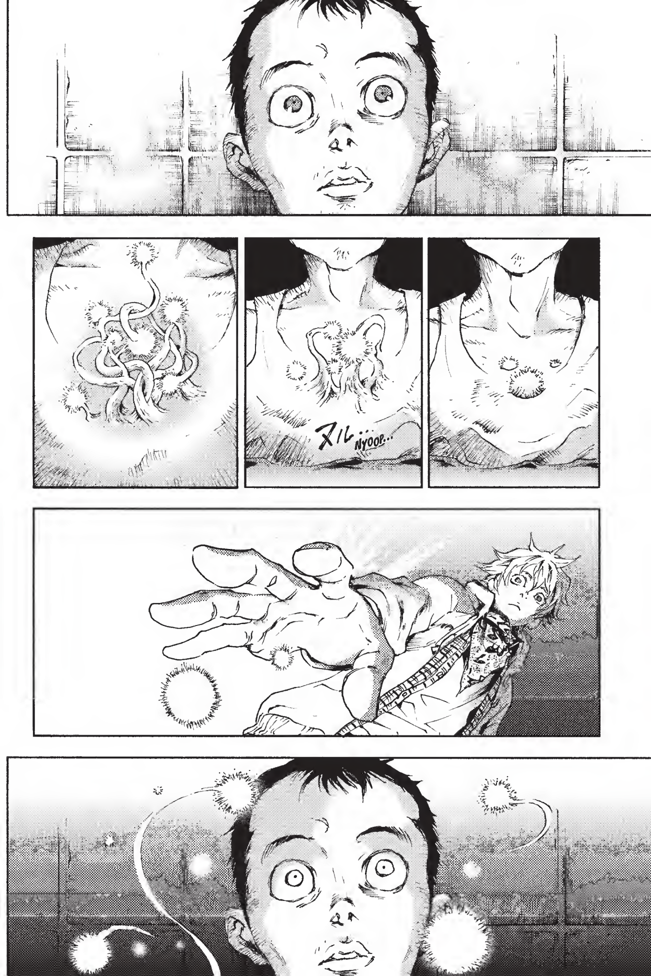

!!
ZSHHH
...
...DAMN IT.

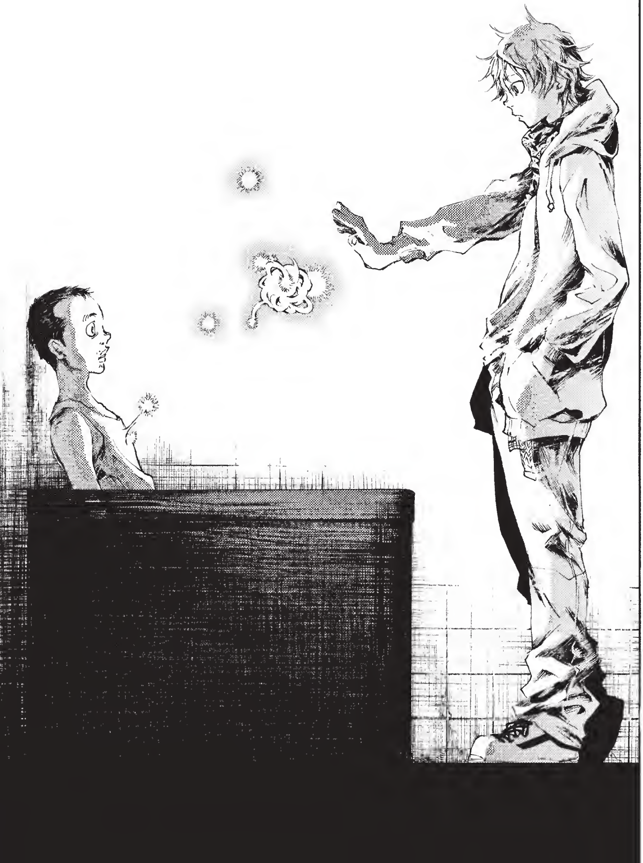

...
...AND THEN I WAS BLESSED WITH A BOX LUNCH.
A BOX LUNCH?
HOW'D IT COME TO THAT?
401
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
...BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?
I'LL SHOW THEM ALL...

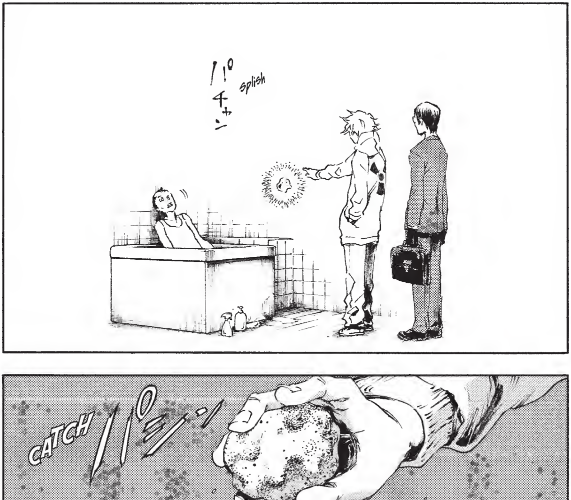

EVEN A GUY LIKE ME IS FREE TO CHOOSE WHEN HE DIES!
...WELL.
LOOKS LIKE HE'S READY TO GO.
SAKURAI.
AN UNPLANNED DEATH WILL DAMAGE YOUR SOUL.
IF YOUR SOUL BREAKS IN THIS APARTMENT,
IT WILL DRAG SOMEONE ELSE ALONG WITH IT.
...OUR JOB IS TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING.

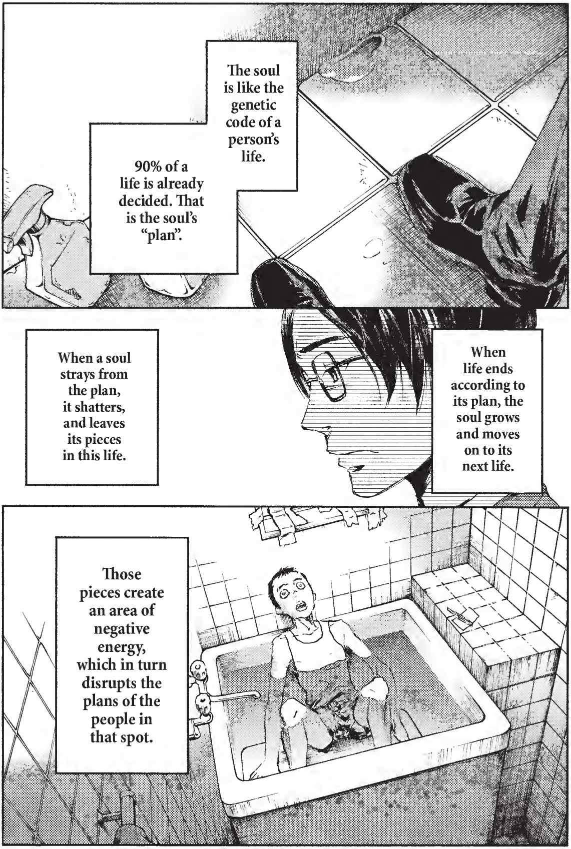

WE WILL TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO "SAVE" YOUR PSYCHOLITH AND KEEP IT INTACT...
...BY TAKING APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO "KILL" YOUR PRESENT BODY.
OKAY?
WELL...I THINK I GET IT... BUT I'M NOT SURE.
IF THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU...
WE'LL NEED YOUR SOUL'S PERMISSION.
...PERMISSION?

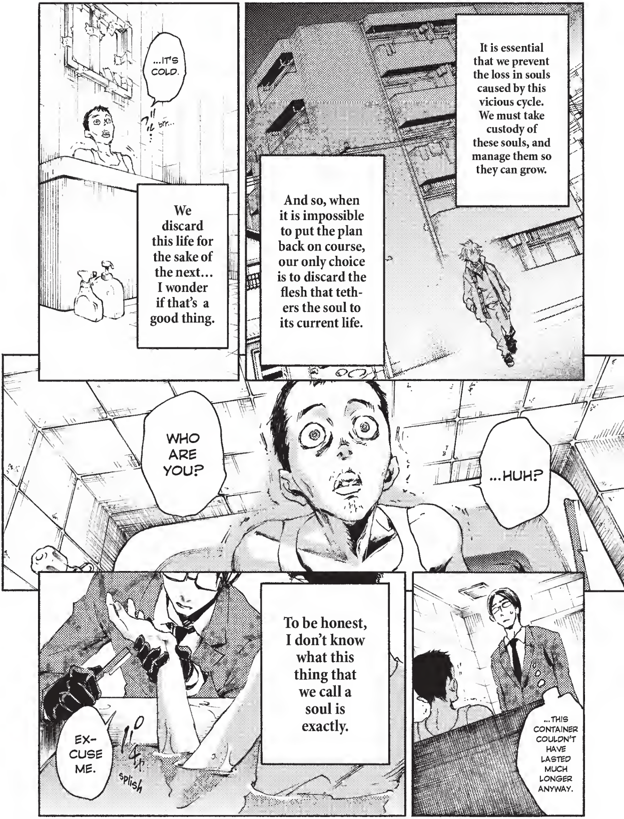

YOU KNOW, LIKE A SIGNAL. TO LET US KNOW YOU'RE OKAY WITH DYING.
...UM.
GOOD LUCK... IN YOUR NEXT LIFE.
HEH.
IS THAT REALLY HOW THIS WORKS?
OKAY, I LIKE IT.
...
THANKS FOR YOUR BUSINESS.
sff

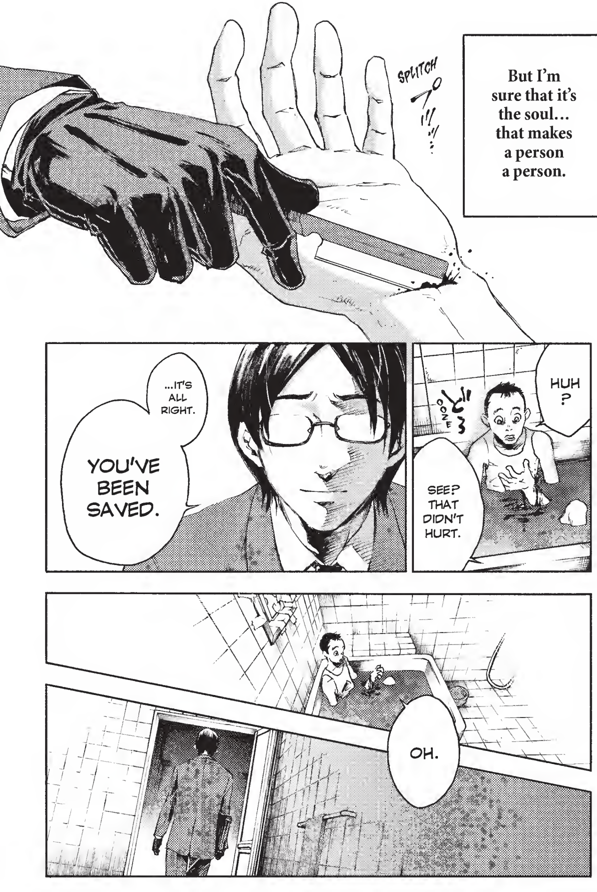

ヌル…
NYOOP...

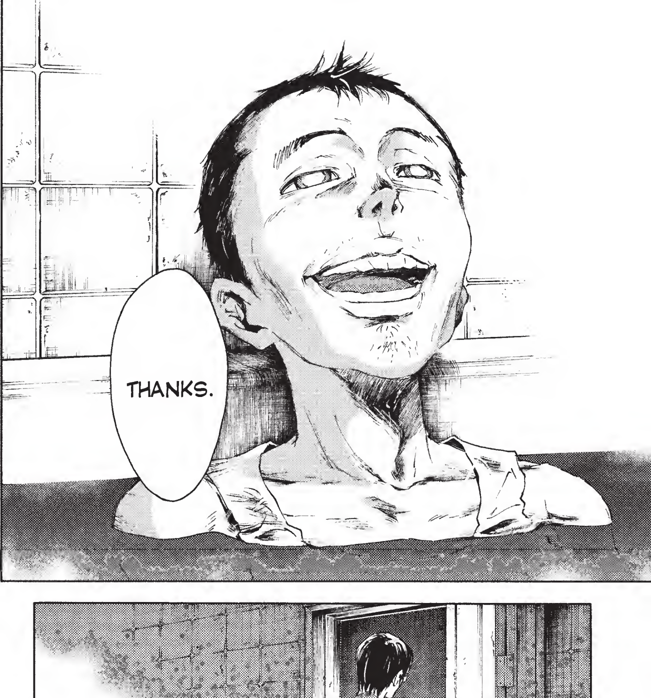


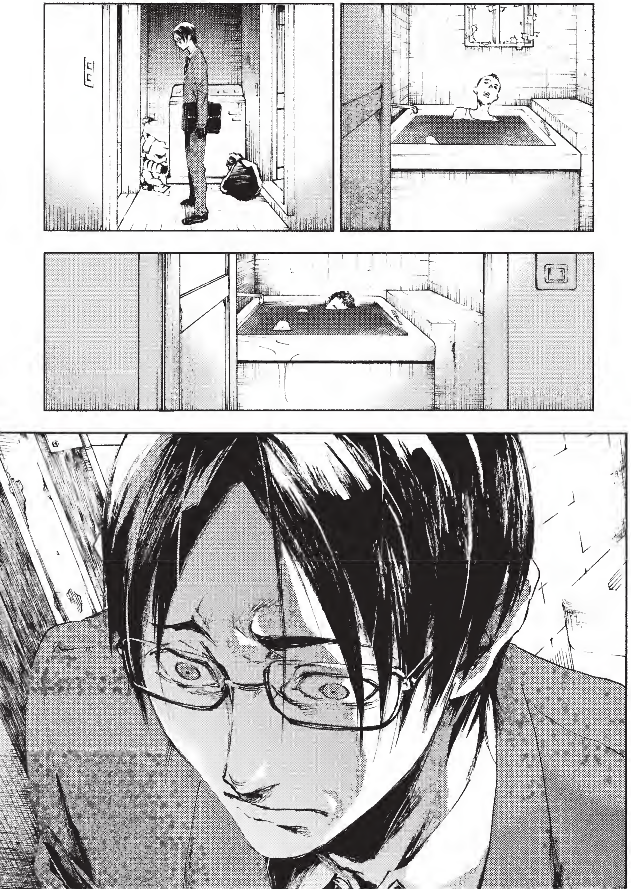

パチャン
splish
CATCH
パシッ
IT'S LUMPY.
...WELL, MY JOB'S DONE.
HAVE FUN TAKING CARE OF THE BODY.

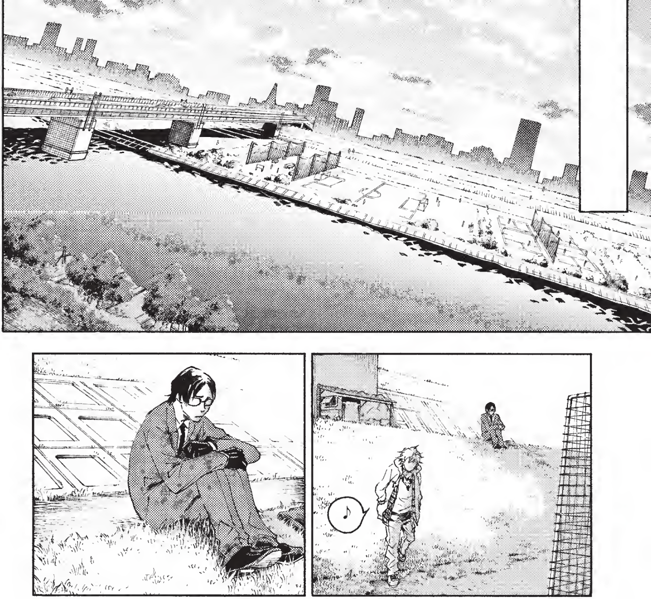

The soul is like the genetic code of a person's life.
90% of a life is already decided. That is the soul's "plan".
When life ends according to its plan, the soul grows and moves on to its next life.
When a soul strays from the plan, it shatters, and leaves its pieces in this life.
Those pieces create an area of negative energy, which in turn disrupts the plans of the people in that spot.

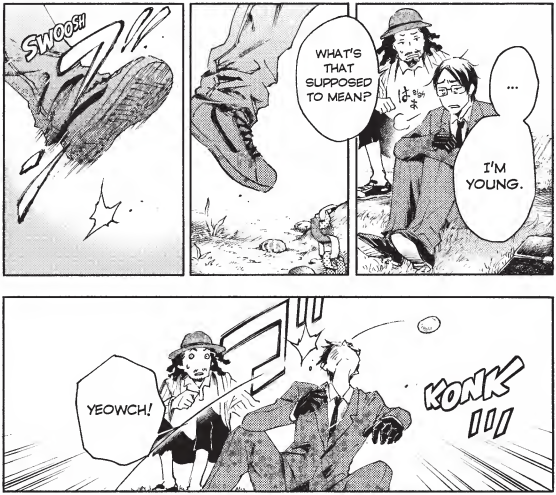

It is essential that we prevent the loss in souls caused by this vicious cycle. We must take custody of these souls, and manage them so they can grow.
And so, when it is impossible to put the plan back on course, our only choice is to discard the flesh that tethers the soul to its current life.
...IT'S COLD.
brr...
We discard this life for the sake of the next... I wonder if that's a good thing.
...HUH?
WHO ARE YOU?
...THIS CONTAINER COULDN'T HAVE LASTED MUCH LONGER ANYWAY.
To be honest, I don't know what this thing that we call a soul is exactly.
EX-CUSE ME.
splish


But I'm sure that it's the soul… that makes a person a person.
SPLITCH
HUH?
OOZE
SEE? THAT DIDN'T HURT.
...IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOU'VE BEEN SAVED.
OH.

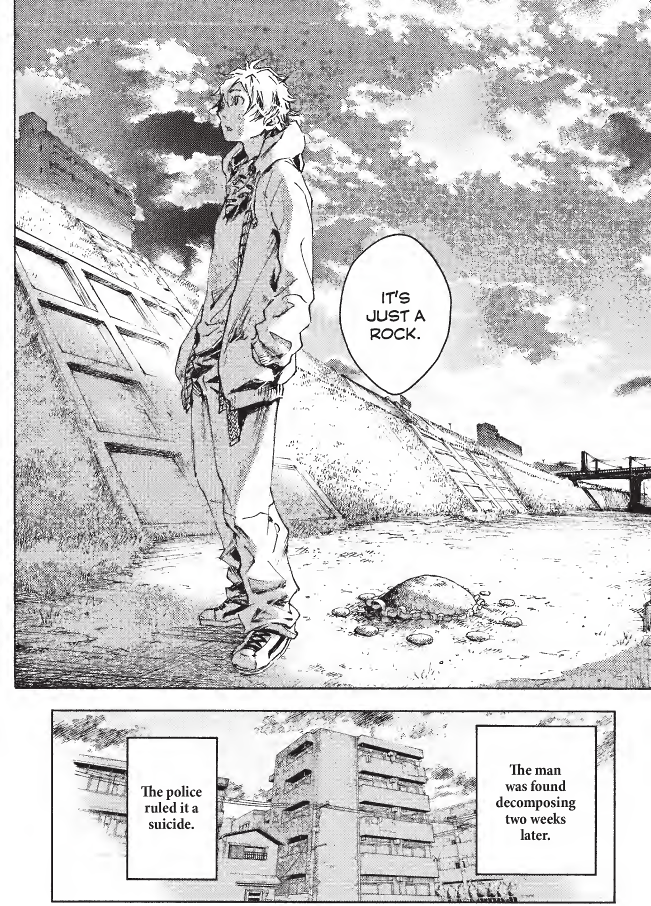

THANKS.
ポチャ…
splish



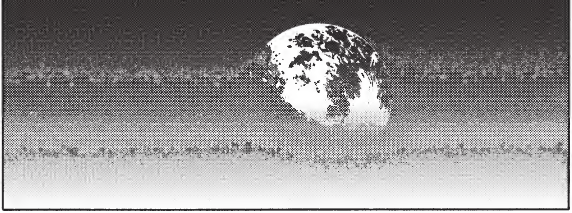

♪
THANKS FOR BRINGING IT IN.
NOT THAT I'M SURPRISED, BUT YOU LOOK TERRIBLE.

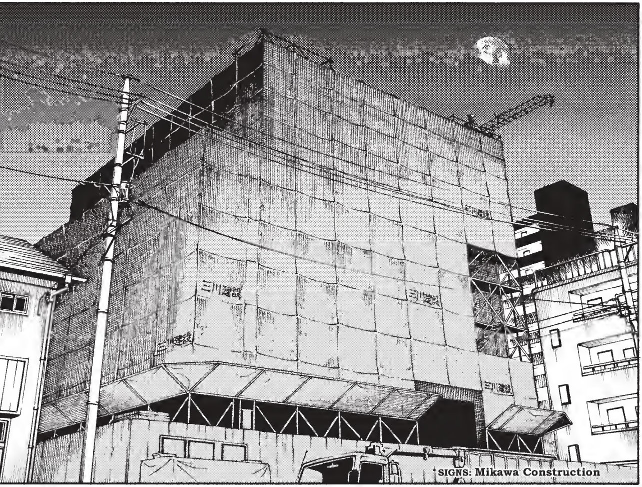

...
I'M YOUNG.
はぁ sigh
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
SWOOSH
ズ!!
KONK
YEOWCH!
I'M BORED. CAN I GO HOME?
Can I?
You're making me mad!
EXCUSE ME, AMANO-KUN!
WHAT DID YOU JUST KICK AT ME?
NOTHING.

WRITING: Bug-Eye

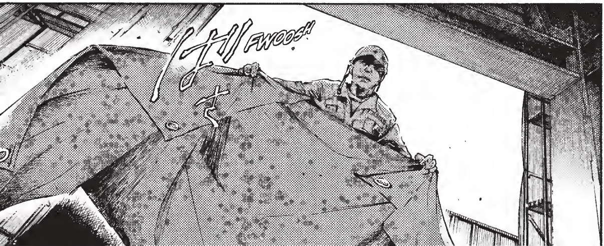

IT'S JUST A ROCK.
The man was found decomposing two weeks later.
The police ruled it a suicide.

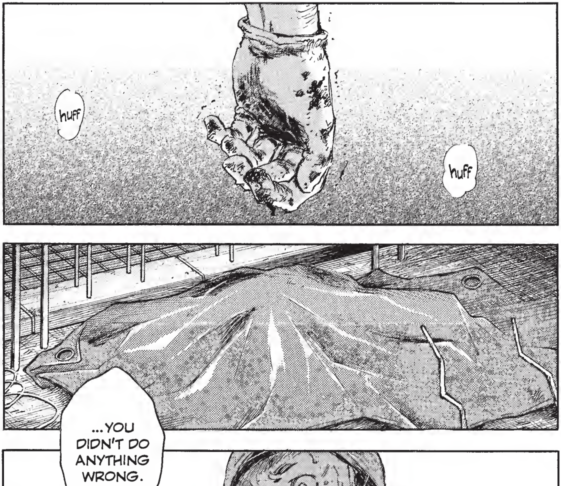
Chapter 2 ✚ A Waste of Justice

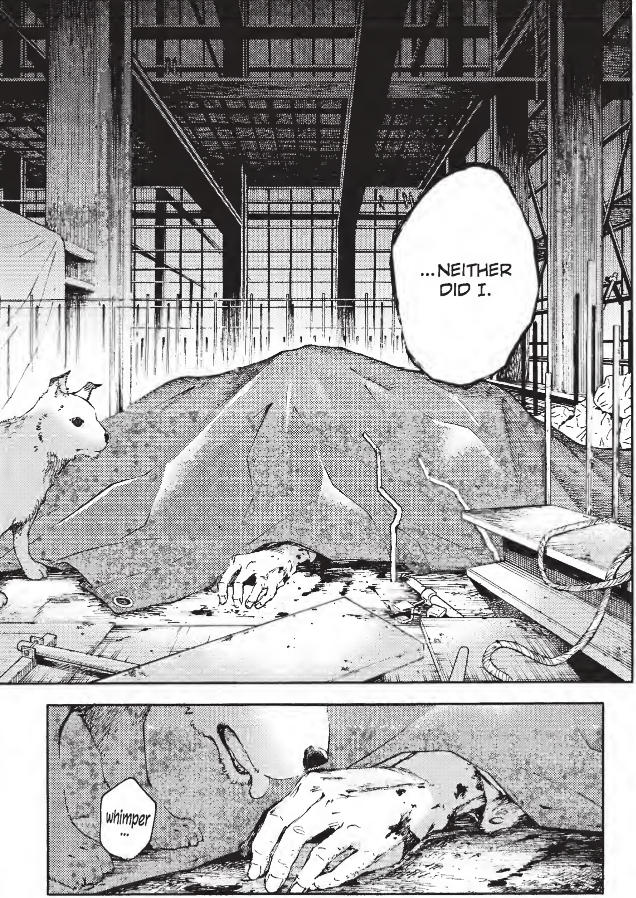


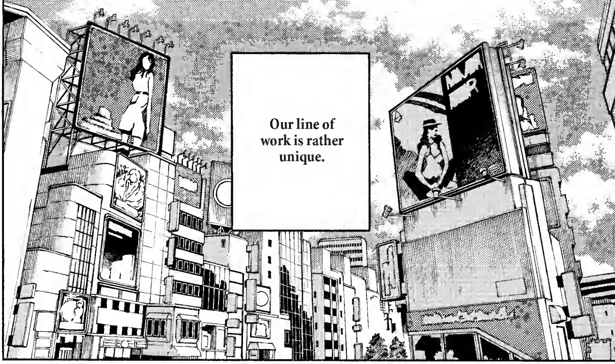

三川建設
三川建設
三川建設
三川建設
三川建設

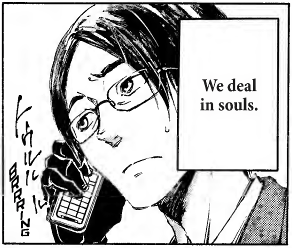
*SIGNS: Mikawa Construction

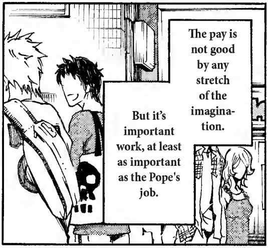


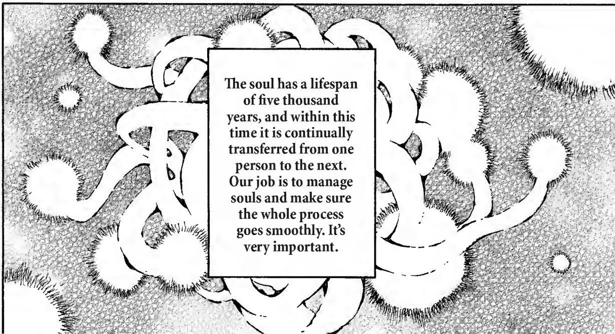

huff
huff
...YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.
BUT...

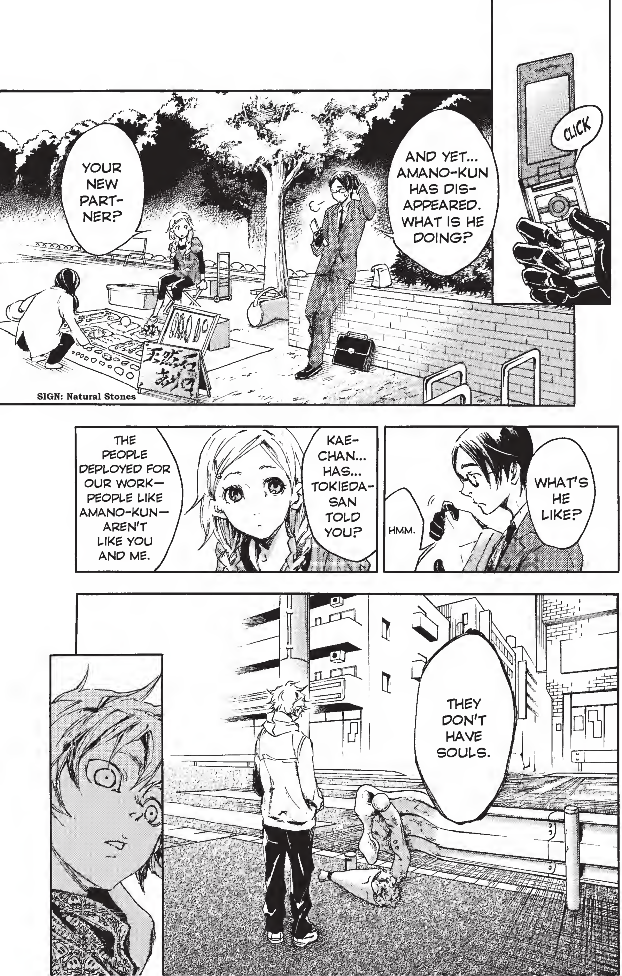

...NEITHER DID I.
whimper ...


Our line of work is rather unique.

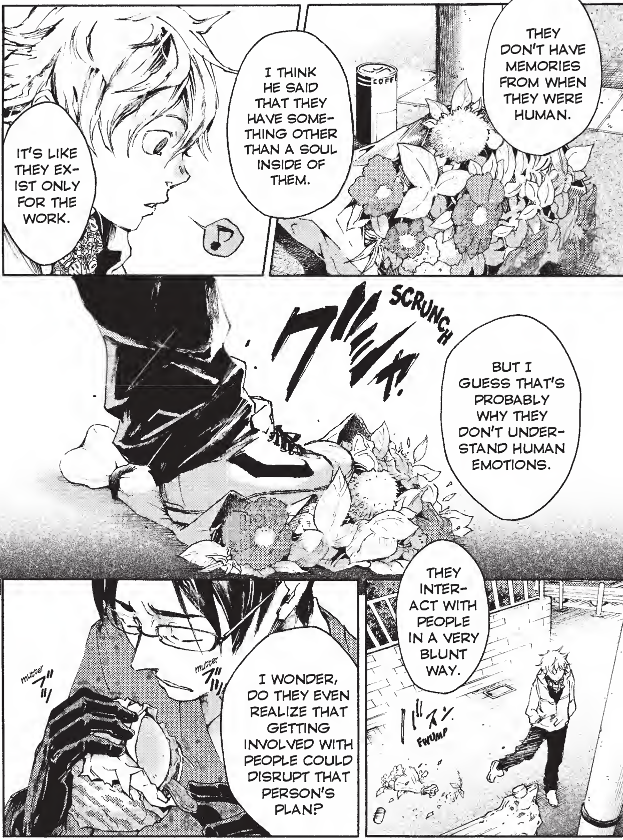

We deal in souls.
ヴルルル
BRRRING

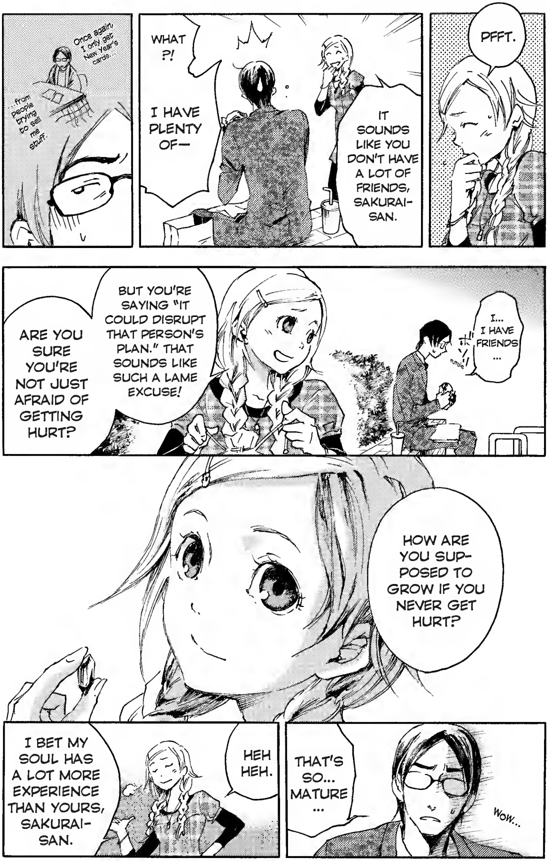

The pay is not good by any stretch of the imagination.
But it's important work, at least as important as the Pope's job.

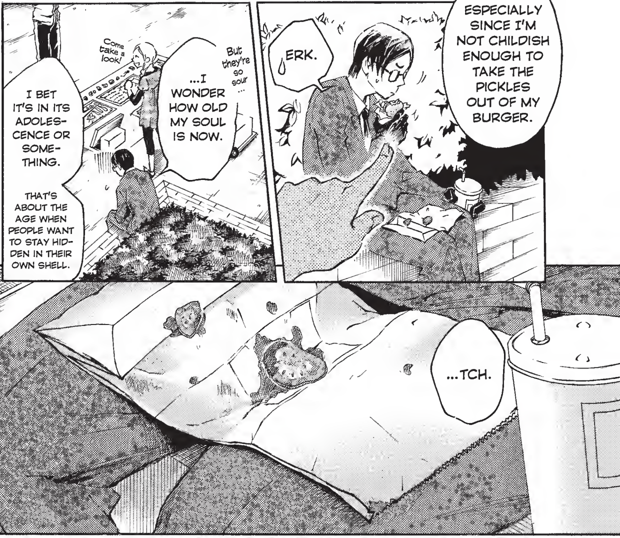

The soul has a lifespan of five thousand years, and within this time it is continually transferred from one person to the next. Our job is to manage souls and make sure the whole process goes smoothly. It's very important.

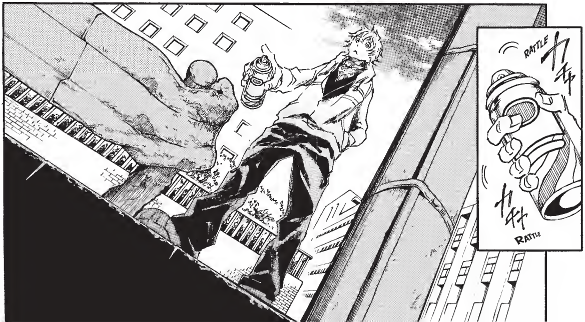

CLICK
AND YET... AMANO-KUN HAS DISAPPEARED. WHAT IS HE DOING?
YOUR NEW PARTNER?
WHAT'S HE LIKE?
HMM.
KAE-CHAN... HAS... TOKIEDA-SAN TOLD YOU?
THE PEOPLE DEPLOYED FOR OUR WORK—PEOPLE LIKE AMANO-KUN—AREN'T LIKE YOU AND ME.
THEY DON'T HAVE SOULS.

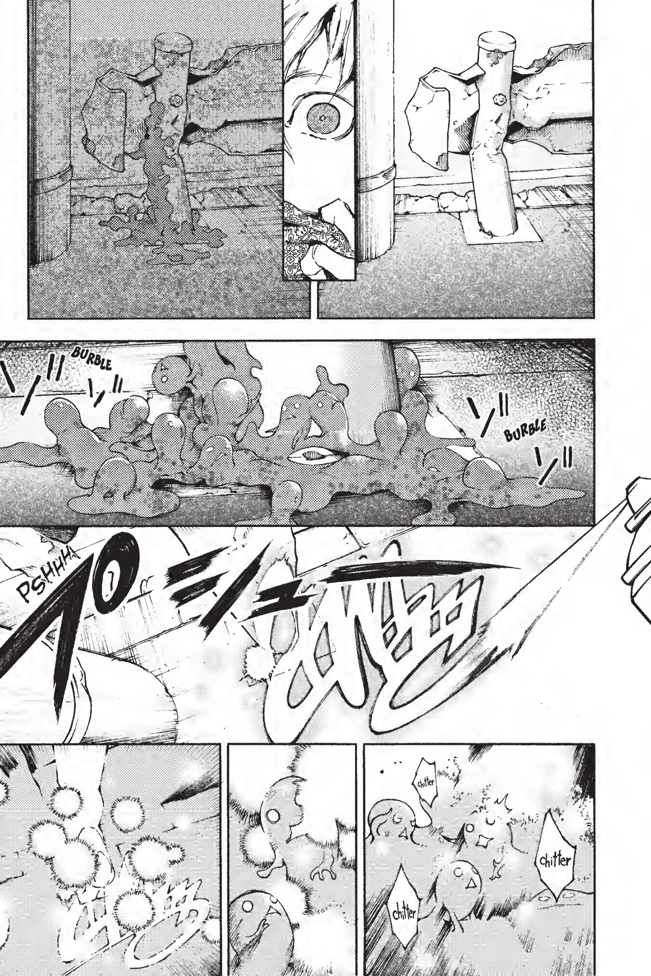
SIGN: Natural Stones

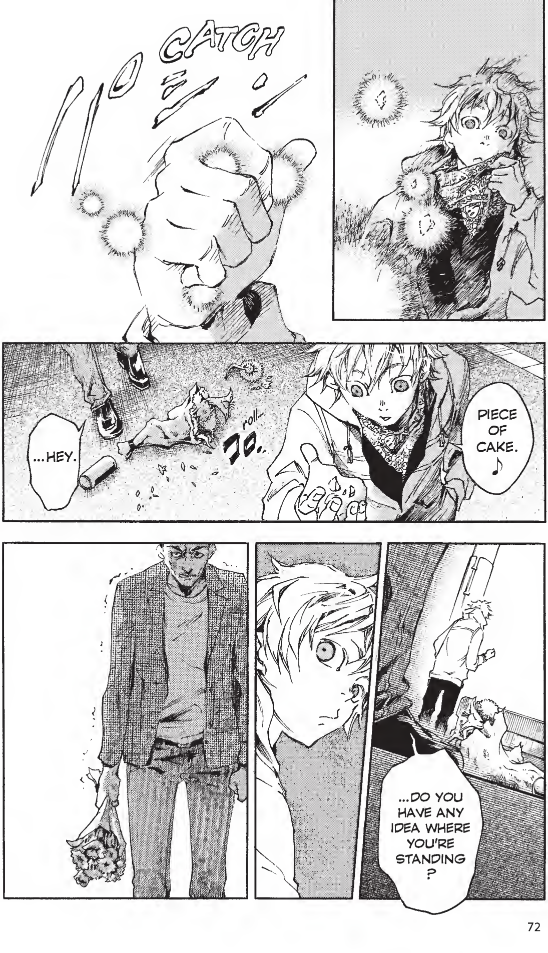

THEY DON'T HAVE MEMORIES FROM WHEN THEY WERE HUMAN.
I THINK HE SAID THAT THEY HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN A SOUL INSIDE OF THEM.
IT'S LIKE THEY EXIST ONLY FOR THE WORK.
♪
グシャ
SCRUNCH
BUT I GUESS THAT'S PROBABLY WHY THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND HUMAN EMOTIONS.
THEY INTERACT WITH PEOPLE IN A VERY BLUNT WAY.
ドスン
FWUMP
I WONDER, DO THEY EVEN REALIZE THAT GETTING INVOLVED WITH PEOPLE COULD DISRUPT THAT PERSON'S PLAN?
ブツ
mutter
ブツ
mutter

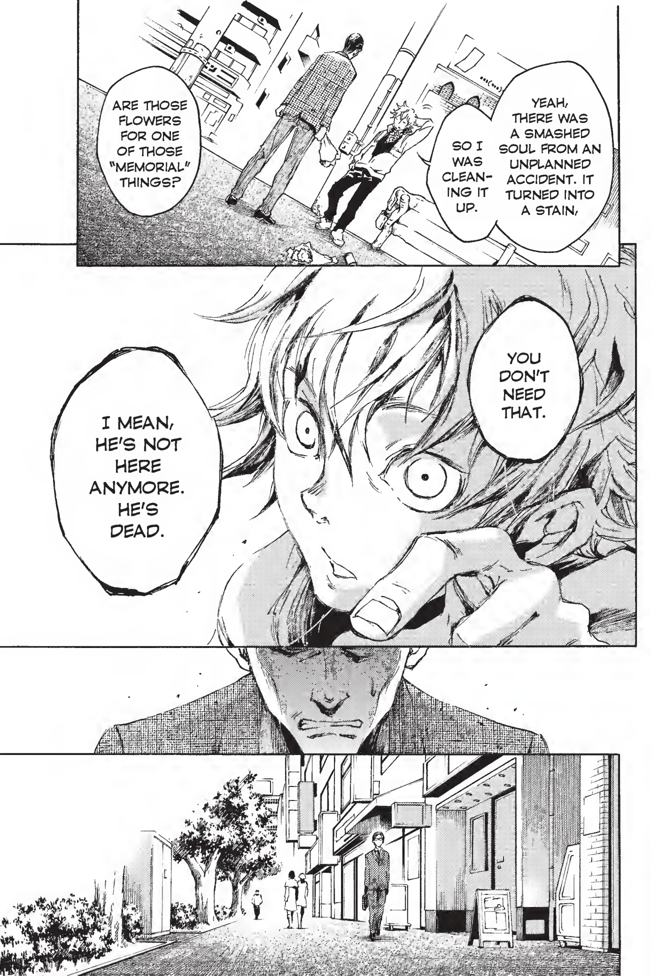

PFFT.
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE A LOT OF FRIENDS, SAKURAI-SAN.
WHAT?!
I HAVE PLENTY OF—
Once again, I only get New Year's cards...
...from people trying to sell me stuff.
I... I HAVE FRIENDS...
mumble
BUT YOU'RE SAYING "IT COULD DISRUPT THAT PERSON'S PLAN." THAT SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A LAME EXCUSE!
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT JUST AFRAID OF GETTING HURT?
HOW ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO GROW IF YOU NEVER GET HURT?
THAT'S SO... MATURE...
Wow...
HEH HEH.
I BET MY SOUL HAS A LOT MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOURS, SAKURAI-SAN.

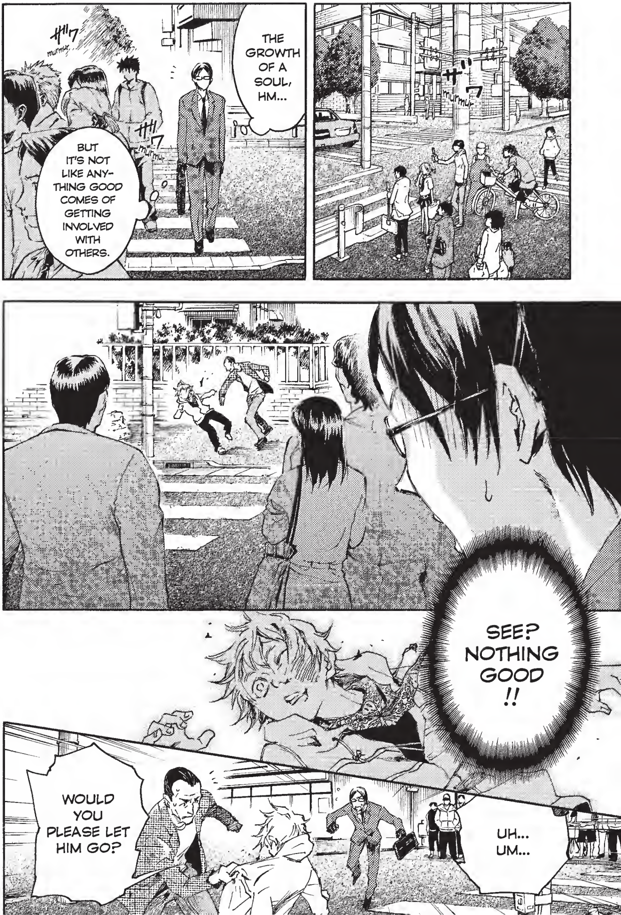

ESPECIALLY SINCE I'M NOT CHILDISH ENOUGH TO TAKE THE PICKLES OUT OF MY BURGER.
ERK.
...I WONDER HOW OLD MY SOUL IS NOW.
But they're so sour ...
Come take a look!
I BET IT'S IN ITS ADOLESCENCE OR SOMETHING.
THAT'S ABOUT THE AGE WHEN PEOPLE WANT TO STAY HIDDEN IN THEIR OWN SHELL.
...TCH.

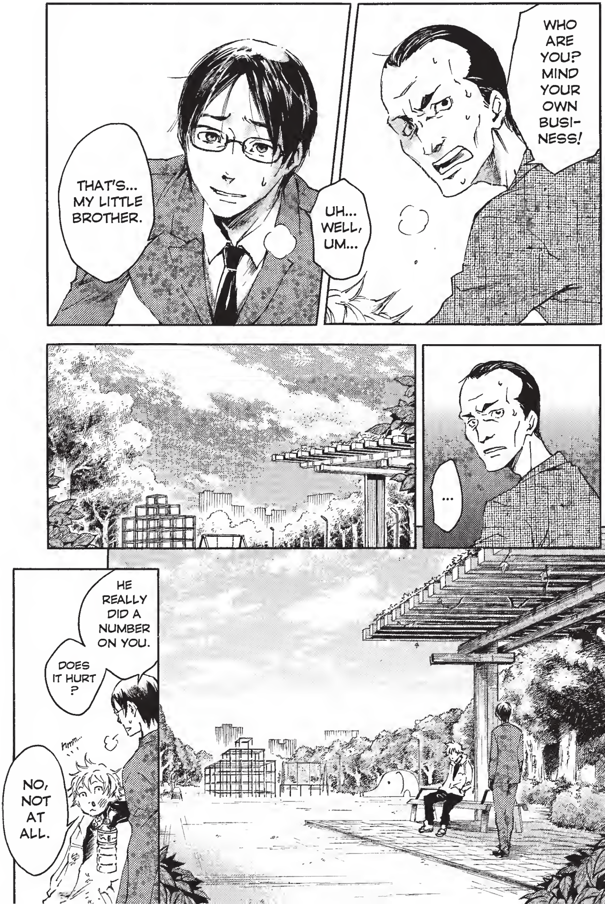

RATTLE
カチャ
カチャ
RATTLE

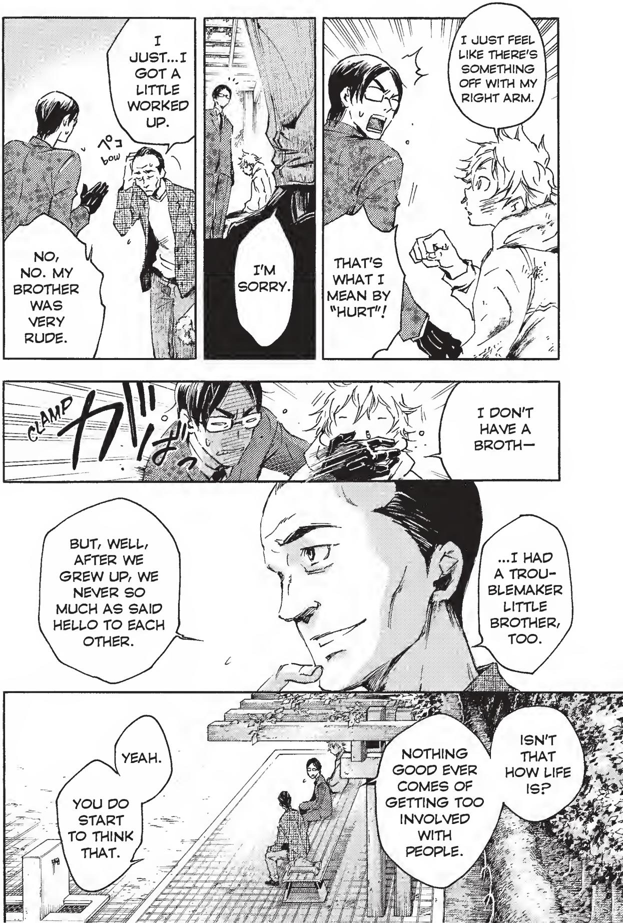

BURBLE
BURBLE
PSHHHA
chitter
chitter
chitter

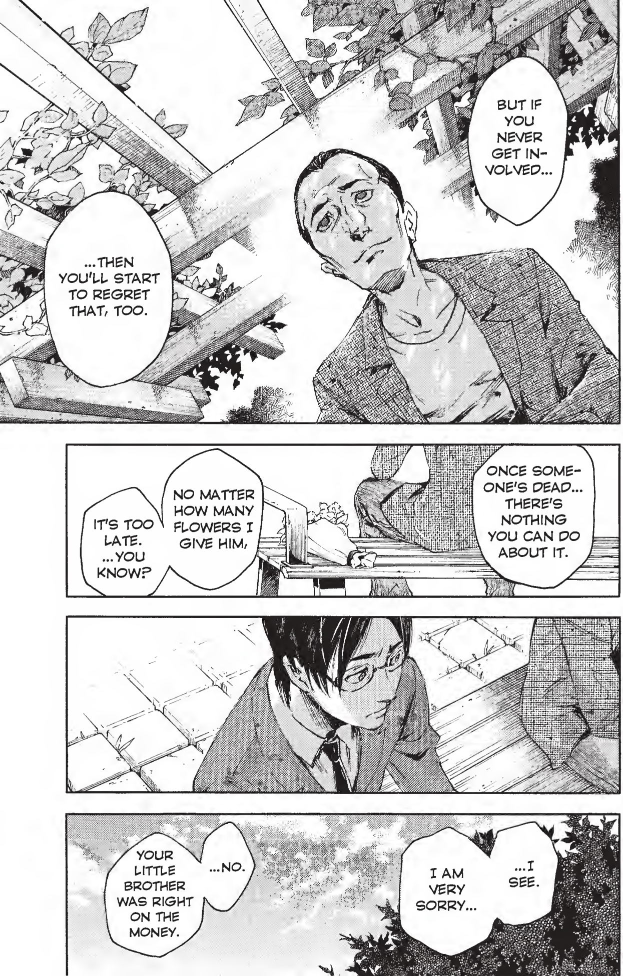

CATCH
PIECE OF CAKE. ♪
roll... コロ..
...HEY.
...DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE YOU'RE STANDING ?

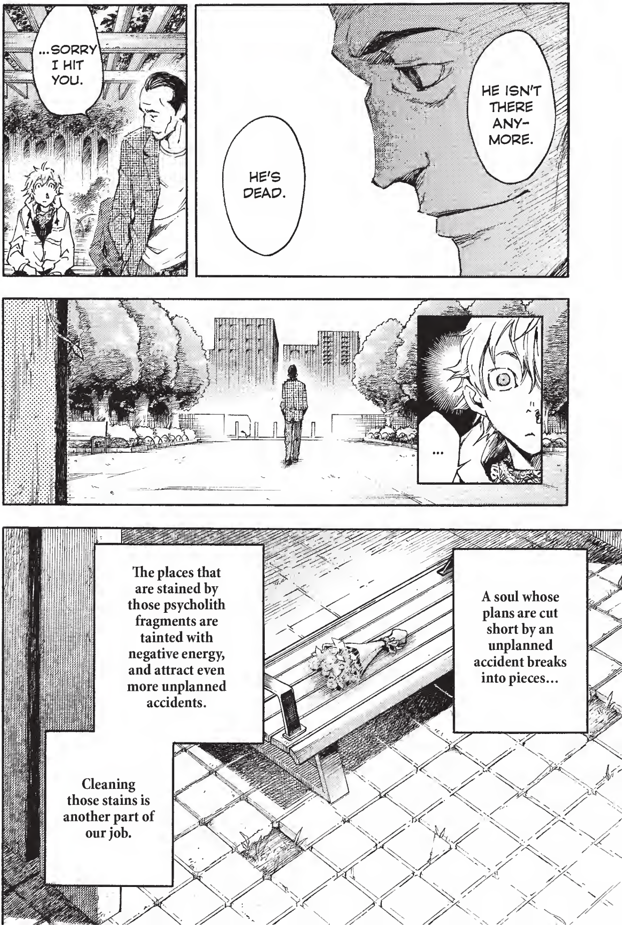

YEAH, THERE WAS A SMASHED SOUL FROM AN UNPLANNED ACCIDENT. IT TURNED INTO A STAIN,
SO I WAS CLEANING IT UP.
ARE THOSE FLOWERS FOR ONE OF THOSE "MEMORIAL" THINGS?
YOU DON'T NEED THAT.
I MEAN, HE'S NOT HERE ANYMORE. HE'S DEAD.

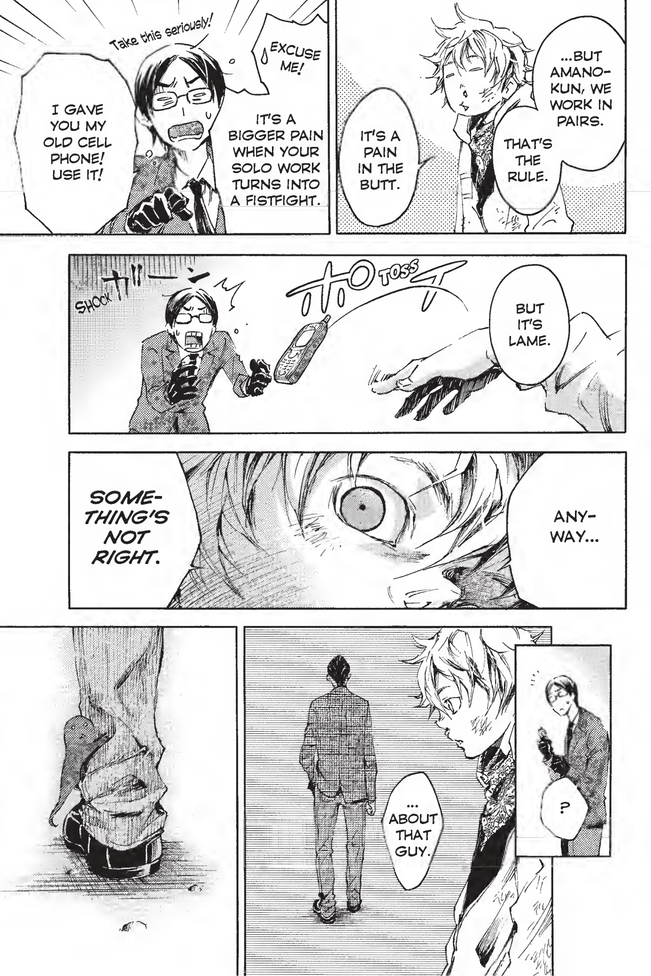

ザワ
murmur
ザワ
murmur
THE GROWTH OF A SOUL, HM...
ザワ
murmur
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE ANYTHING GOOD COMES OF GETTING INVOLVED WITH OTHERS.
SEE? NOTHING GOOD !!
UH... UM...
WOULD YOU PLEASE LET HIM GO?

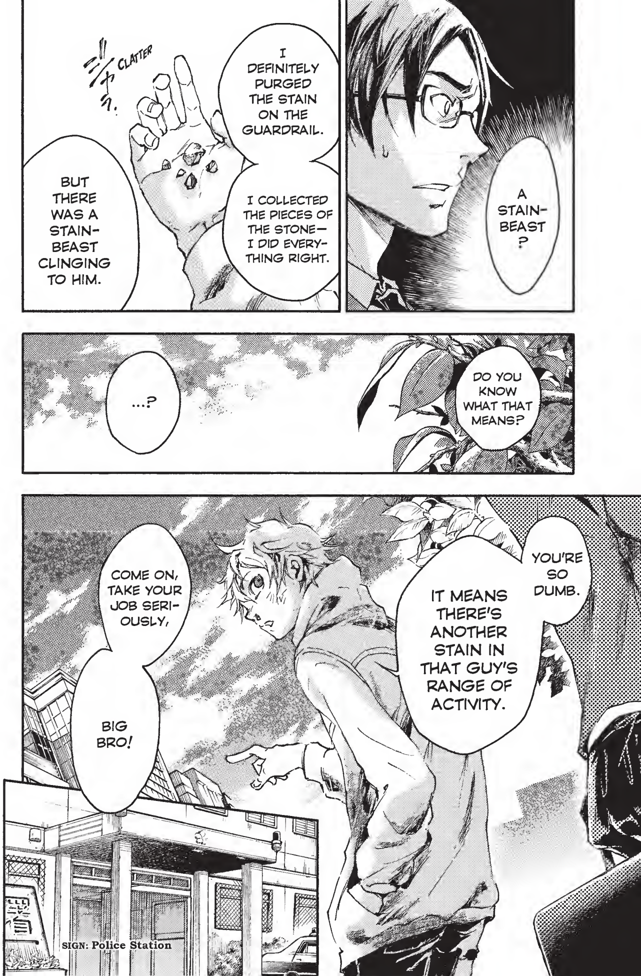

WHO ARE YOU? MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!
UH... WELL, UM...
THAT'S... MY LITTLE BROTHER.
...
HE REALLY DID A NUMBER ON YOU.
DOES IT HURT?
hmm...
NO, NOT AT ALL.

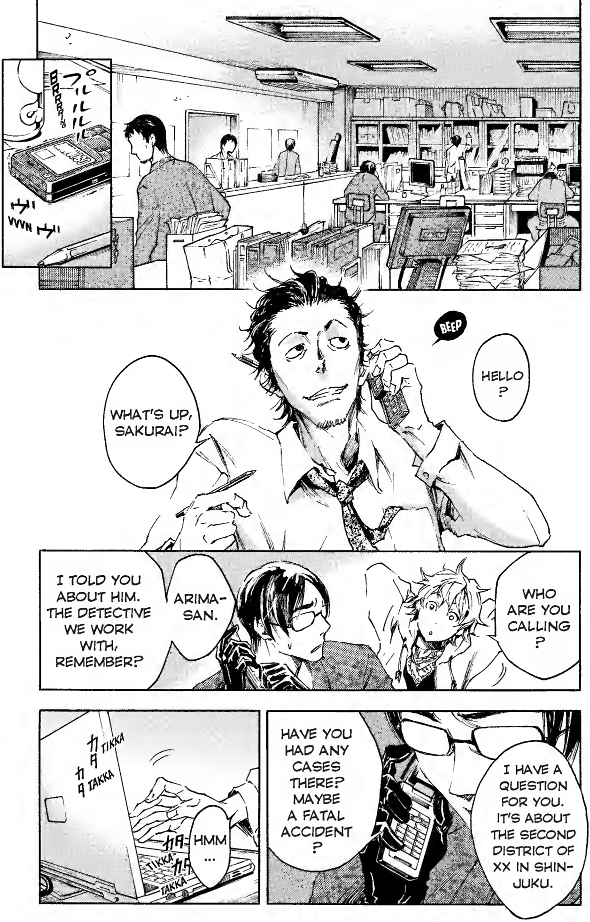

I JUST FEEL LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING OFF WITH MY RIGHT ARM.
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN BY "HURT"!
I'M SORRY.
I JUST...I GOT A LITTLE WORKED UP.
ペコ
bow
NO, NO. MY BROTHER WAS VERY RUDE.
I DON'T HAVE A BROTH—
ガバ
CLAMP
ぱっ
...I HAD A TROUBLEMAKER LITTLE BROTHER, TOO.
BUT, WELL, AFTER WE GREW UP, WE NEVER SO MUCH AS SAID HELLO TO EACH OTHER.
ISN'T THAT HOW LIFE IS?
NOTHING GOOD EVER COMES OF GETTING TOO INVOLVED WITH PEOPLE.
YEAH.
YOU DO START TO THINK THAT.

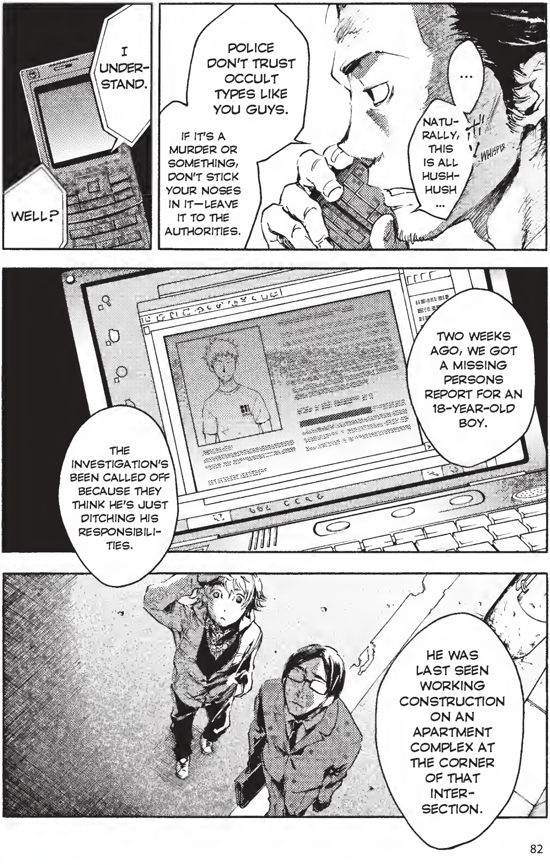

BUT IF YOU NEVER GET INVOLVED...
...THEN YOU'LL START TO REGRET THAT, TOO.
ONCE SOMEONE'S DEAD... THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.
NO MATTER HOW MANY FLOWERS I GIVE HIM,
IT'S TOO LATE. ...YOU KNOW?
...I SEE.
I AM VERY SORRY...
...NO.
YOUR LITTLE BROTHER WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY.

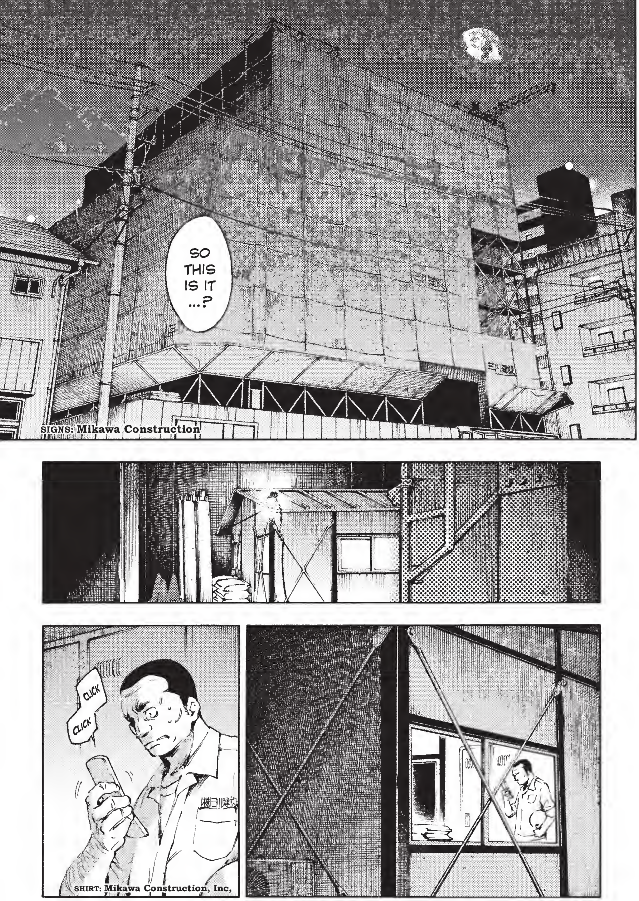

HE ISN'T THERE ANY-MORE.
HE'S DEAD.
...SORRY I HIT YOU.
...
A soul whose plans are cut short by an unplanned accident breaks into pieces...
The places that are stained by those psycholith fragments are tainted with negative energy, and attract even more unplanned accidents.
Cleaning those stains is another part of our job.

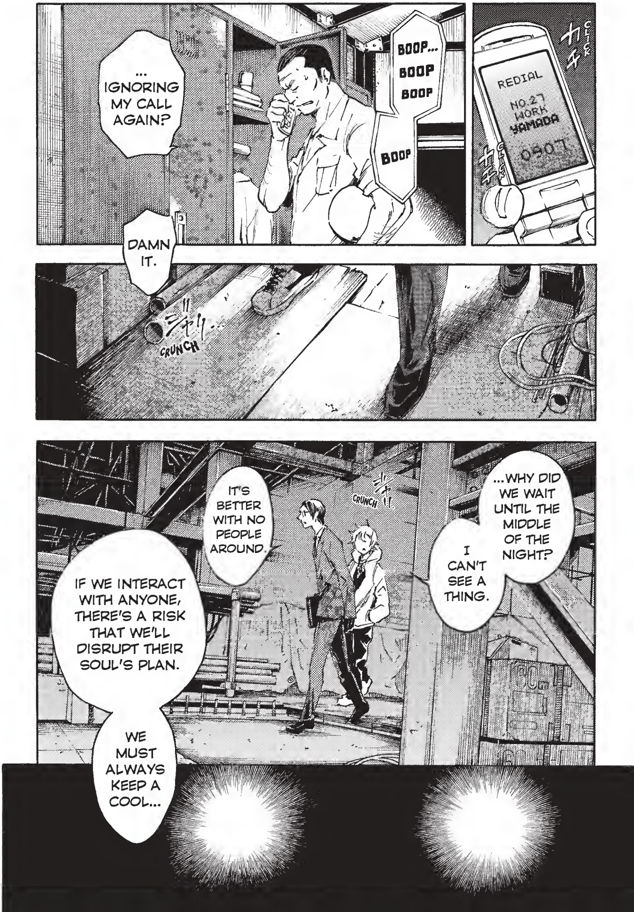

...BUT AMANO-KUN, WE WORK IN PAIRS.
THAT'S THE RULE.
IT'S A PAIN IN THE BUTT.
IT'S A BIGGER PAIN WHEN YOUR SOLO WORK TURNS INTO A FISTFIGHT.
EXCUSE ME!
Take this seriously!
I GAVE YOU MY OLD CELL PHONE! USE IT!
BUT IT'S LAME.
TOSS
SHOCK
ANYWAY...
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.
?
...ABOUT THAT GUY.

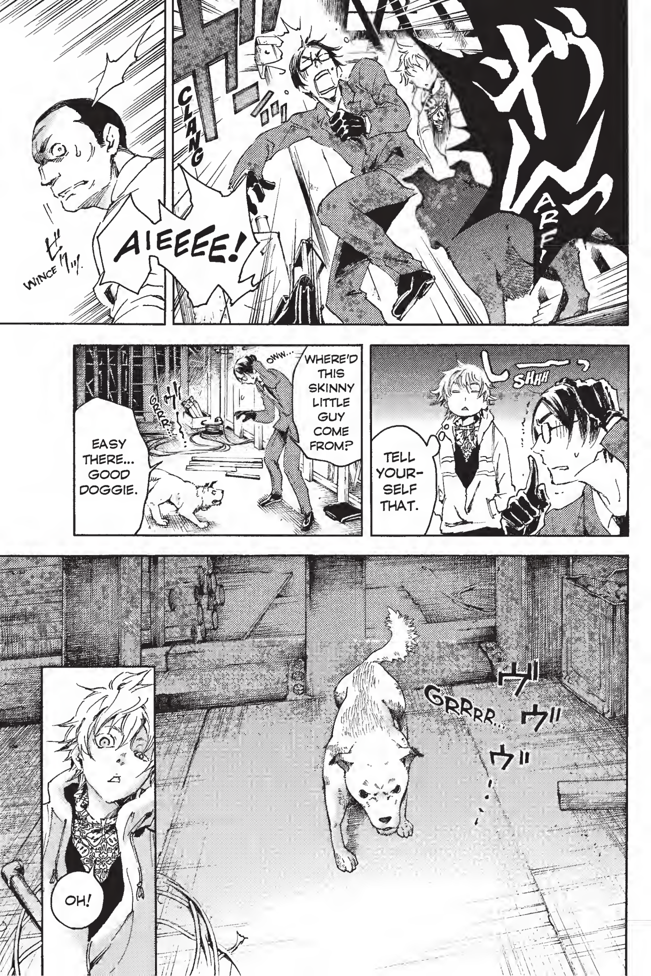

A STAIN-BEAST?
I DEFINITELY PURGED THE STAIN ON THE GUARDRAIL.
I COLLECTED THE PIECES OF THE STONE—I DID EVERYTHING RIGHT.
BUT THERE WAS A STAIN-BEAST CLINGING TO HIM.
カラ CLATTER
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
...?
YOU'RE SO DUMB.
IT MEANS THERE'S ANOTHER STAIN IN THAT GUY'S RANGE OF ACTIVITY.
COME ON, TAKE YOUR JOB SERIOUSLY,
BIG BRO!
SIGN: Police Station

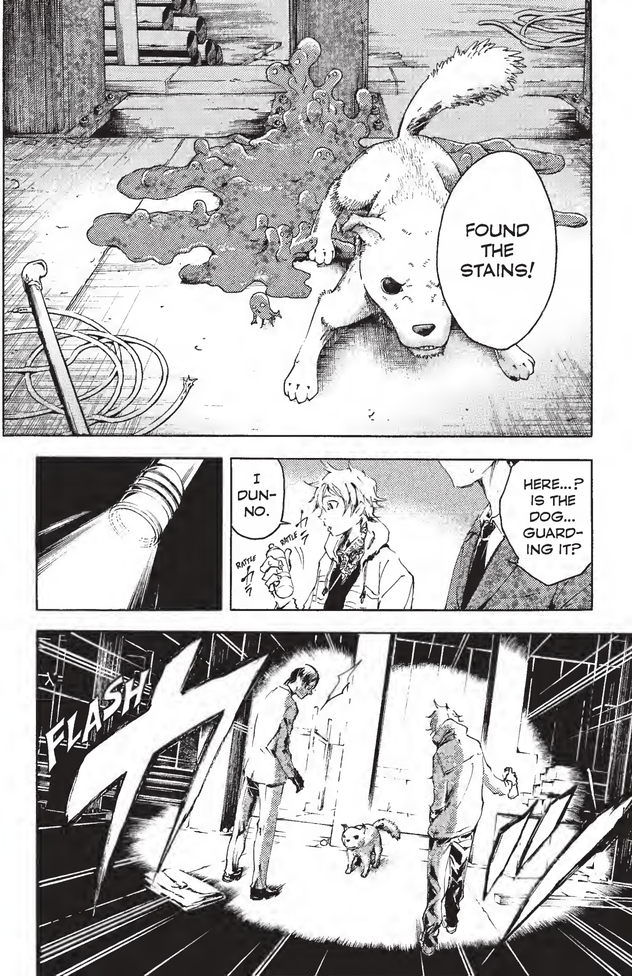

プルルル!!
BRRRRING
VVVN
BEEP
HELLO?
WHAT'S UP, SAKURAI?
WHO ARE YOU CALLING?
ARIMA-SAN.
I TOLD YOU ABOUT HIM. THE DETECTIVE WE WORK WITH, REMEMBER?
I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU. IT'S ABOUT THE SECOND DISTRICT OF XX IN SHIN-JUKU.
HAVE YOU HAD ANY CASES THERE? MAYBE A FATAL ACCIDENT?
カタ TIKKA
カタ TAKKA
HMM...
カタ TIKKA
カタ TAKKA

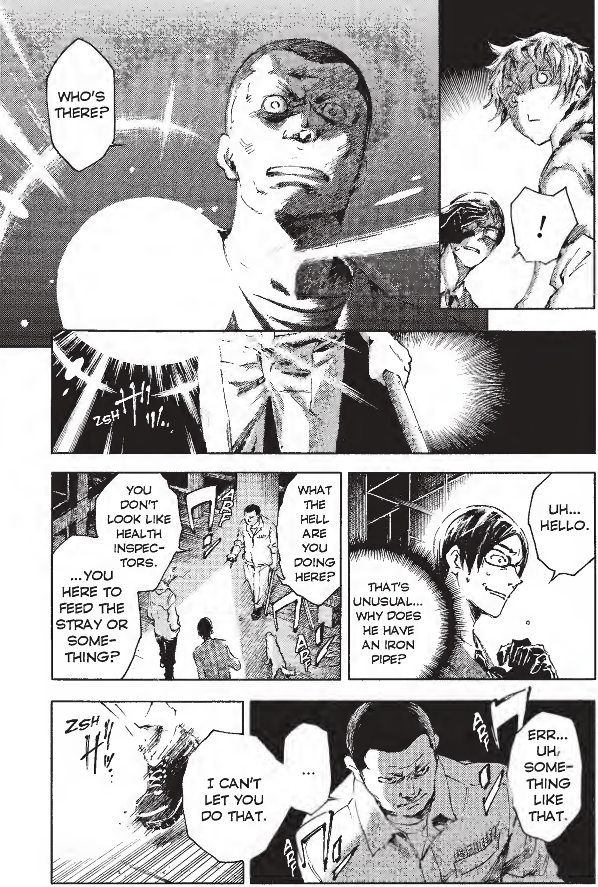

...
NATURALLY, THIS IS ALL HUSH-HUSH...
WHISPER
POLICE DON'T TRUST OCCULT TYPES LIKE YOU GUYS.
IF IT'S A MURDER OR SOMETHING, DON'T STICK YOUR NOSES IN IT—LEAVE IT TO THE AUTHORITIES.
I UNDERSTAND.
WELL?
TWO WEEKS AGO, WE GOT A MISSING PERSONS REPORT FOR AN 18-YEAR-OLD BOY.
THE INVESTIGATION'S BEEN CALLED OFF BECAUSE THEY THINK HE'S JUST DITCHING HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.
HE WAS LAST SEEN WORKING CONSTRUCTION ON AN APARTMENT COMPLEX AT THE CORNER OF THAT INTERSECTION.

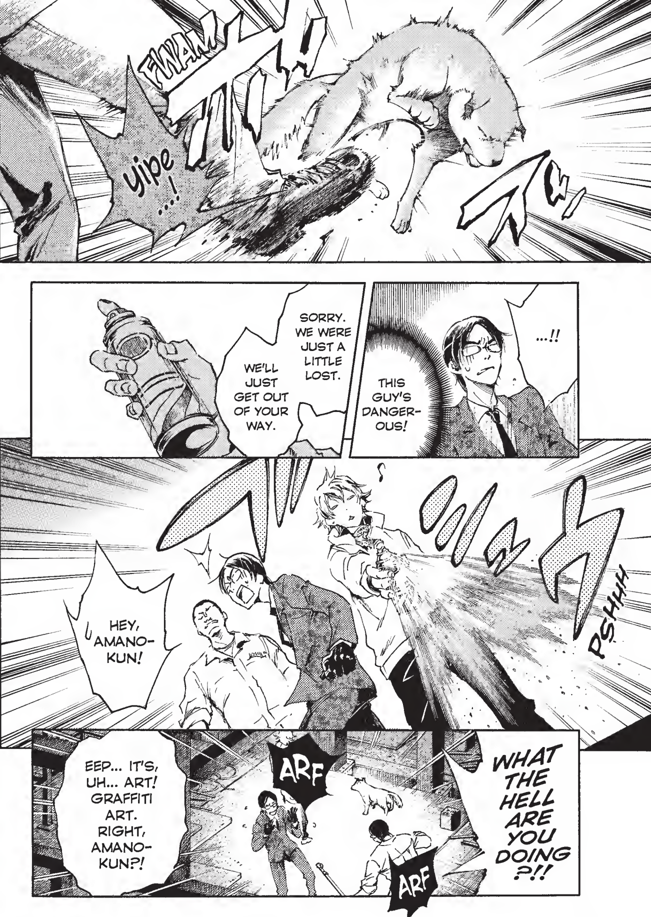

SO THIS IS IT ...?
SIGNS: Mikawa Construction
CLICK
CLICK
SHIRT: Mikawa Construction, Inc,

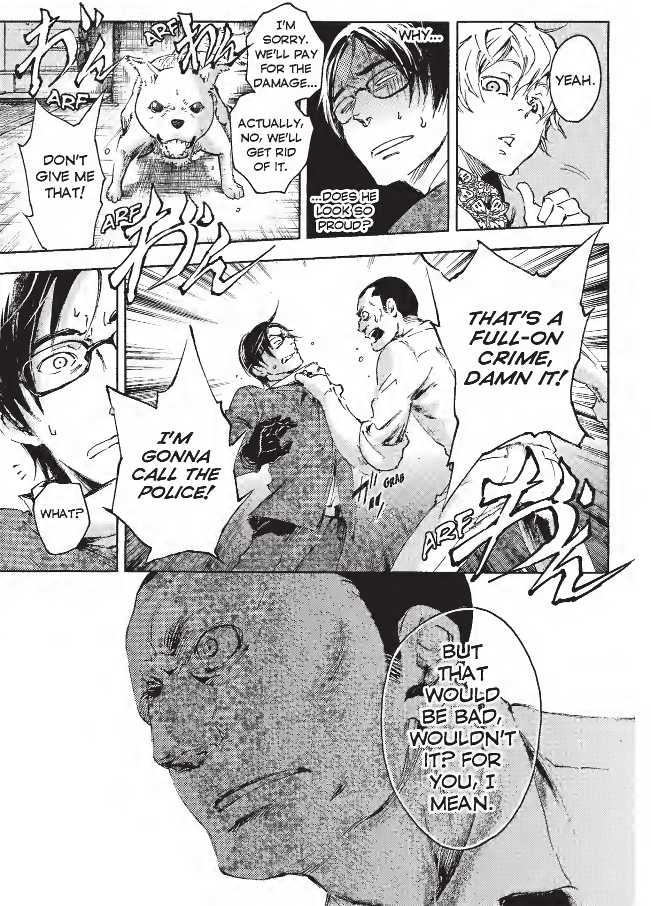

カチ CLICK
REDIAL
NO.27
WORK
YAMADA
0907
カチ CLICK
BOOP... BOOP BOOP
BOOP
... IGNORING MY CALL AGAIN?
DAMN IT.
ジャリ... CRUNCH
...WHY DID WE WAIT UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?
I CAN'T SEE A THING.
ジャ CRUNCH
IT'S BETTER WITH NO PEOPLE AROUND.
IF WE INTERACT WITH ANYONE, THERE'S A RISK THAT WE'LL DISRUPT THEIR SOUL'S PLAN.
WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP A COOL...

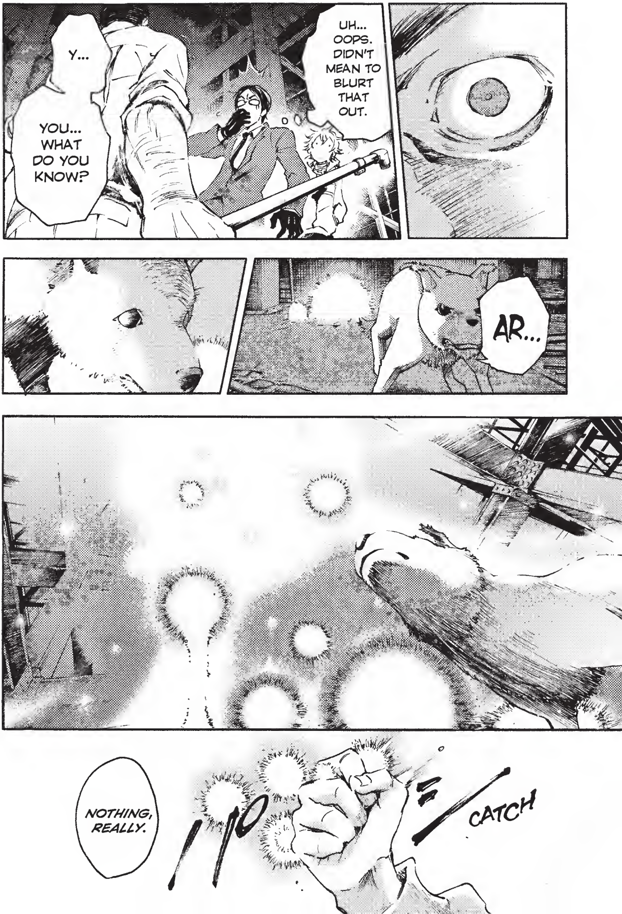

ぎゃん
ARF!
CLANG
AIEEEE!
ビクッ
WINCE
しーっ
SHHH
TELL YOURSELF THAT.
OWW...
WHERE'D THIS SKINNY LITTLE GUY COME FROM?
GRRR...
EASY THERE... GOOD DOGGIE.
ヴヴ ウヴ ヴ
GRRRR...
OH!

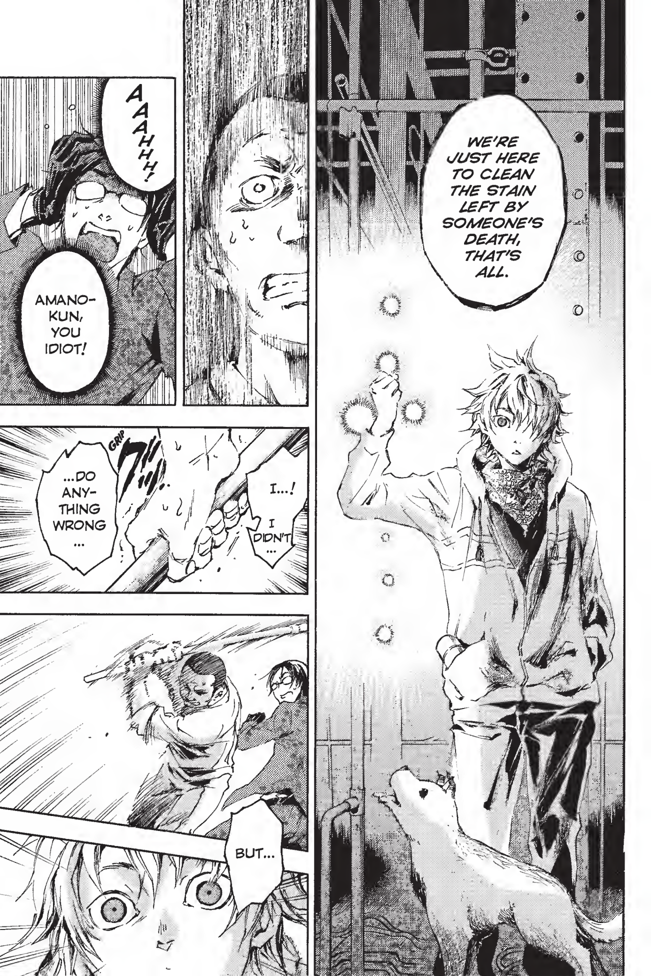

FOUND THE STAINS!
HERE...? IS THE DOG... GUARDING IT?
I DUNNO.
RATTLE
RATTLE
FLASH

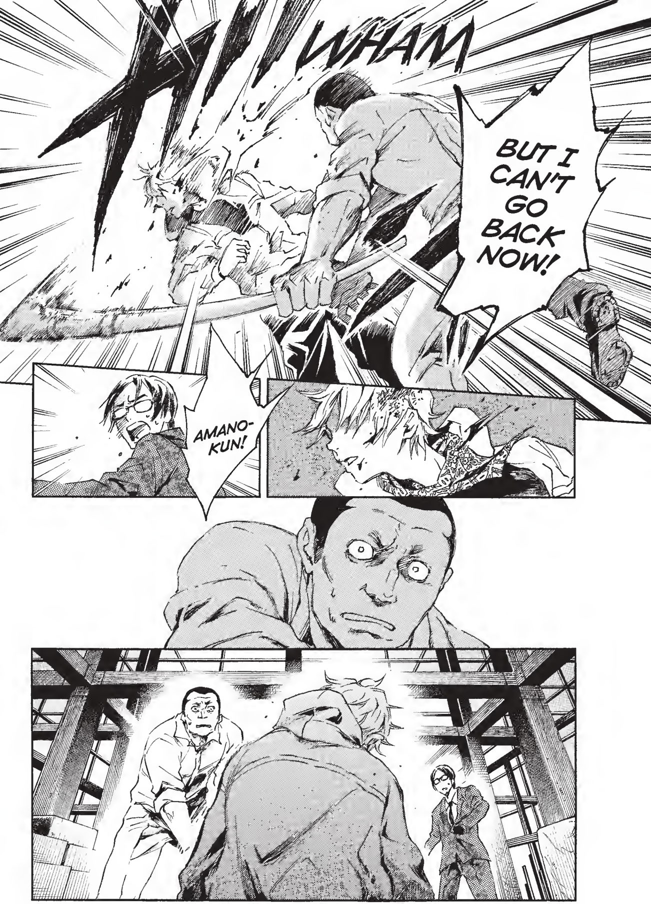

!
WHO'S THERE?
ZSH
UH... HELLO.
THAT'S UNUSUAL... WHY DOES HE HAVE AN IRON PIPE?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
ARF
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE HEALTH INSPECTORS.
...YOU HERE TO FEED THE STRAY OR SOMETHING?
ARF
ARF
ERR... UH, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
ARF
...
I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT.
ZSH

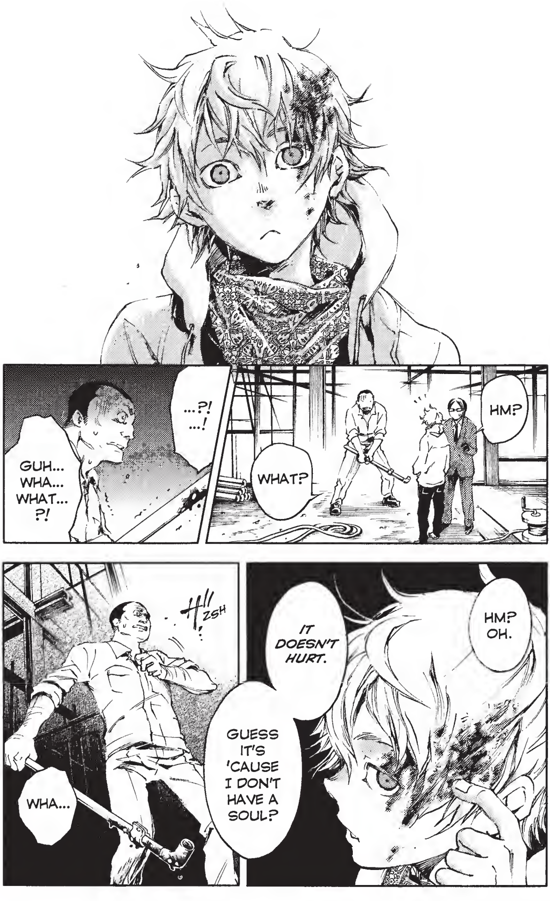

FWAM
yipe ...!
...!!
THIS GUY'S DANGEROUS!
SORRY. WE WERE JUST A LITTLE LOST.
WE'LL JUST GET OUT OF YOUR WAY.
PSHHH
HEY, AMANO-KUN!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!!
ARF
ARF
EEP... IT'S, UH... ART! GRAFFITI ART. RIGHT, AMANO-KUN?!

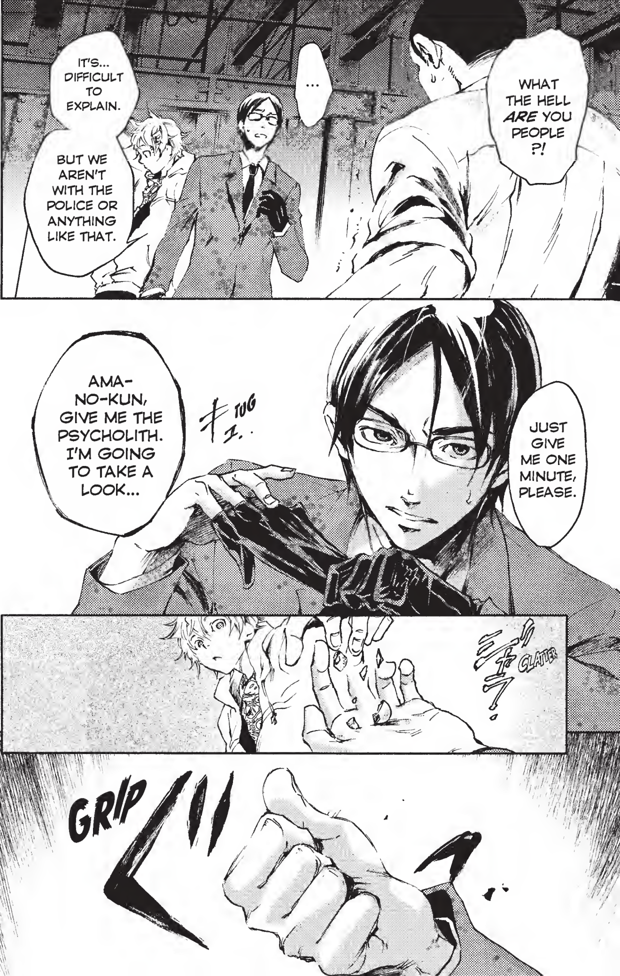

YEAH.
WHY...
...DOES HE LOOK SO PROUD?
I'M SORRY. WE'LL PAY FOR THE DAMAGE...
ACTUALLY, NO, WE'LL GET RID OF IT.
ARF わん
わん
ARF
DON'T GIVE ME THAT!
ARF わん
THAT'S A FULL-ON CRIME, DAMN IT!
I'M GONNA CALL THE POLICE!
GRAB
ARF
WHAT?
BUT THAT WOULD BE BAD, WOULDN'T IT? FOR YOU, I MEAN.

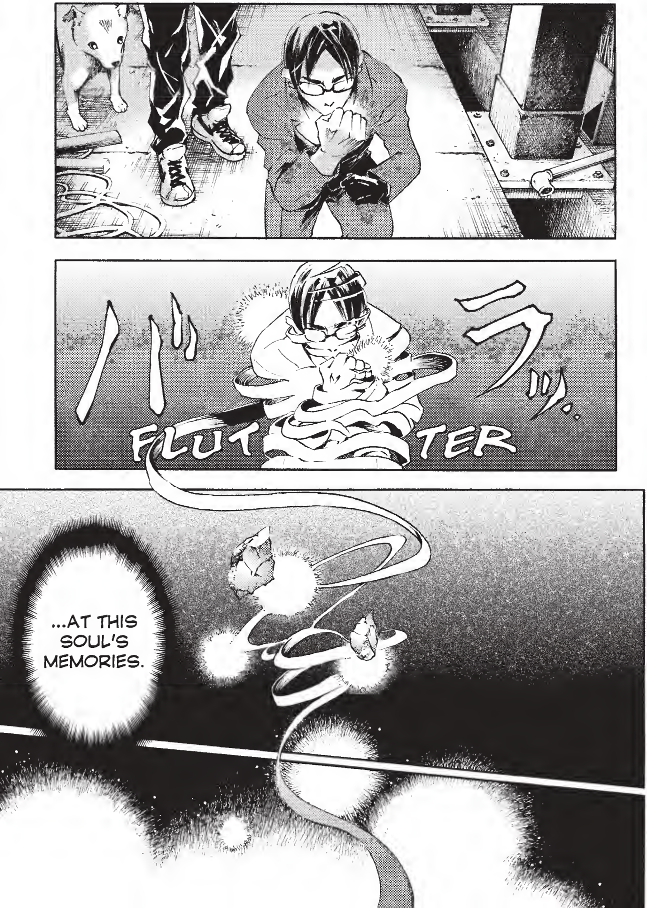

UH... OOPS. DIDN'T MEAN TO BLURT THAT OUT.
Y...
YOU... WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
AR...
NOTHING, REALLY.
CATCH

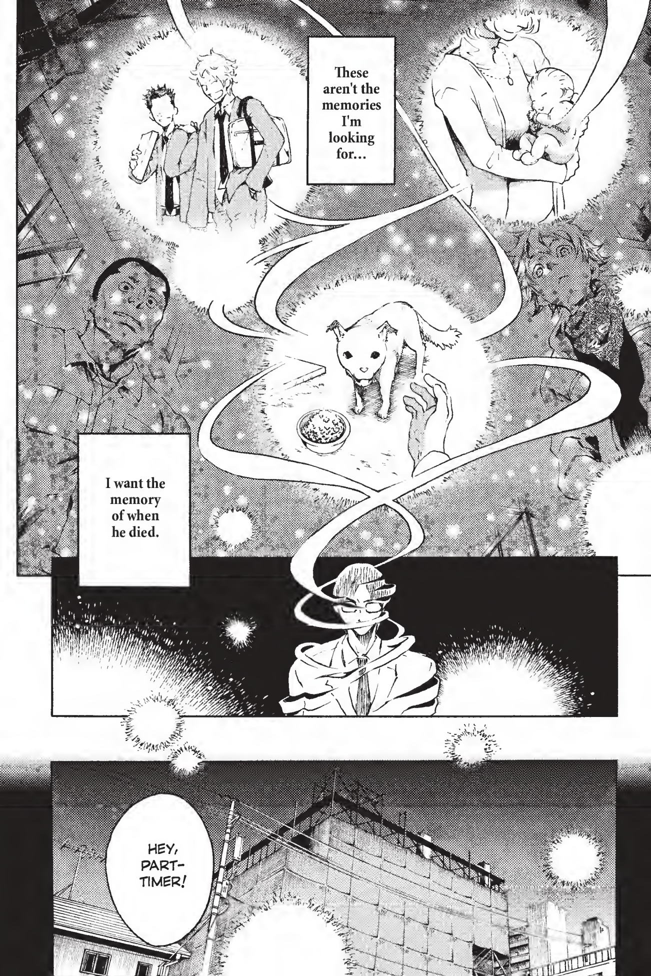

WE'RE JUST HERE TO CLEAN THE STAIN LEFT BY SOMEONE'S DEATH, THAT'S ALL.
AAAHHH!
AMANO-KUN, YOU IDIOT!
I...! I DIDN'T ...
GRIP
...DO ANYTHING WRONG ...
BUT...

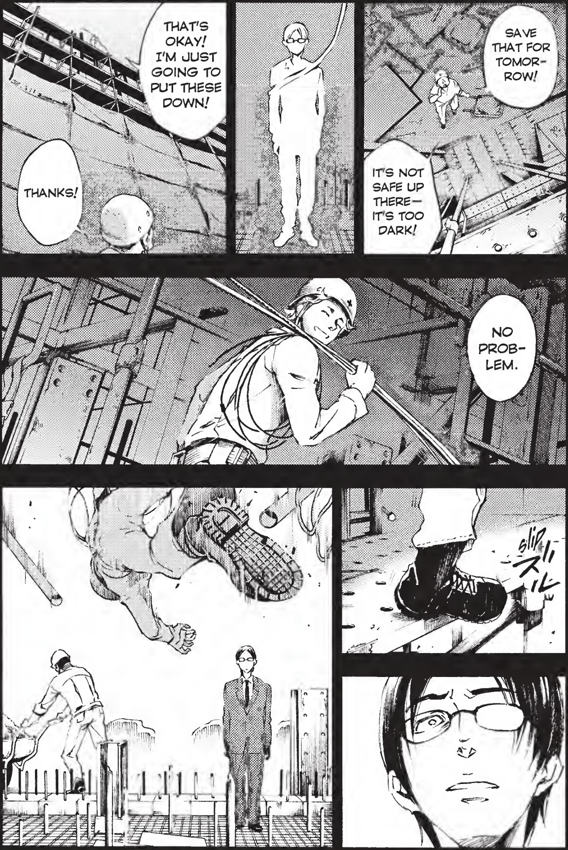

WHAM
BUT I CAN'T GO BACK NOW!
AMANO-KUN!

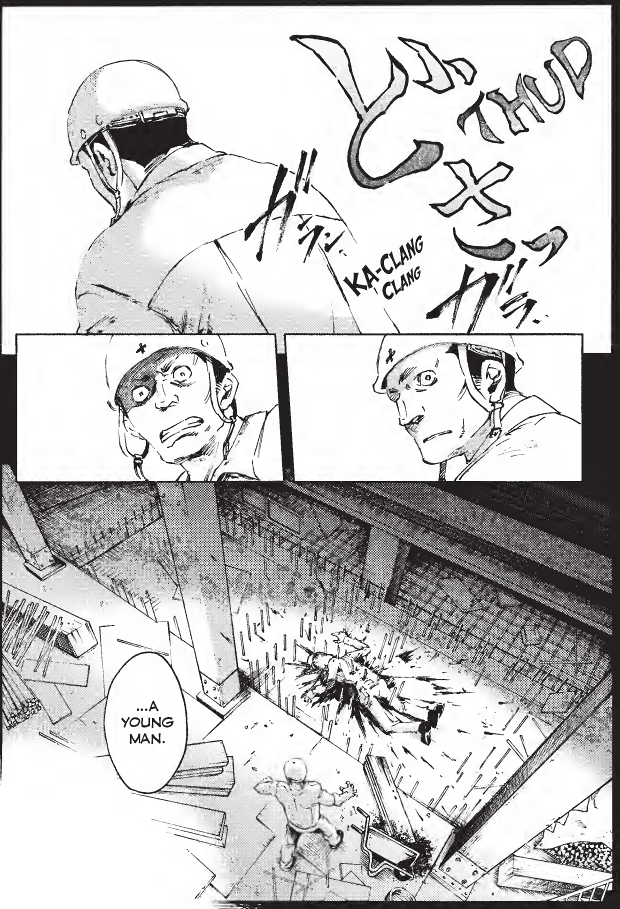

HM?
WHAT?
...?! ...!
GUH... WHA... WHAT...?!
HM? OH.
IT DOESN'T HURT.
GUESS IT'S 'CAUSE I DON'T HAVE A SOUL?
ZSH
WHA...

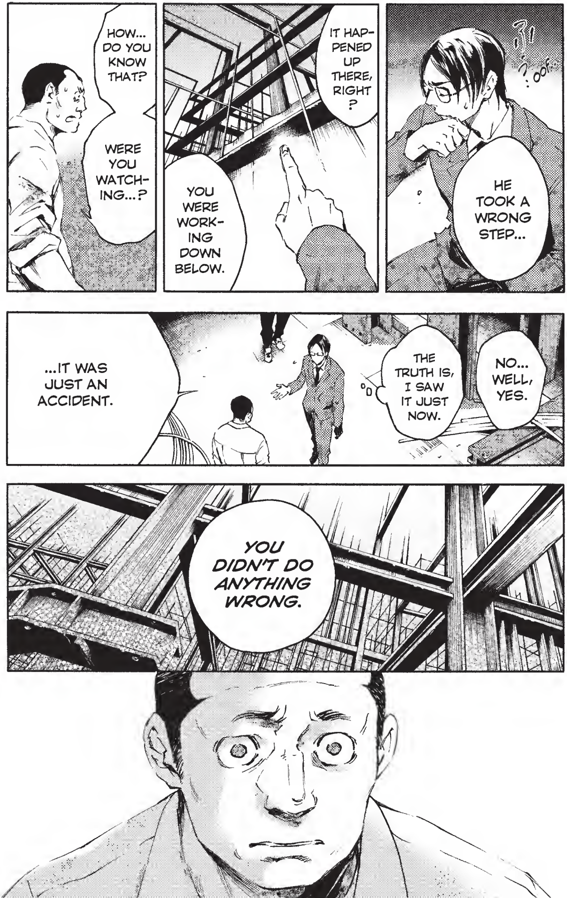

WHAT THE HELL *ARE* YOU PEOPLE ?!
...
IT'S... DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN.
BUT WE AREN'T WITH THE POLICE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
JUST GIVE ME ONE MINUTE, PLEASE.
TUG
AMA-NO-KUN, GIVE ME THE PSYCHOLITH. I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK...
CLATTER
GRIP

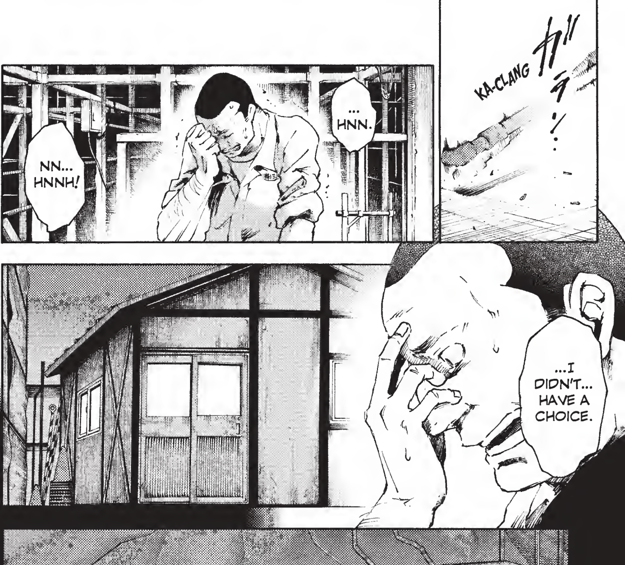

バラッ..
FLUTTER
...AT THIS SOUL'S MEMORIES.


These aren't the memories I'm looking for...
I want the memory of when he died.
HEY, PART-TIMER!

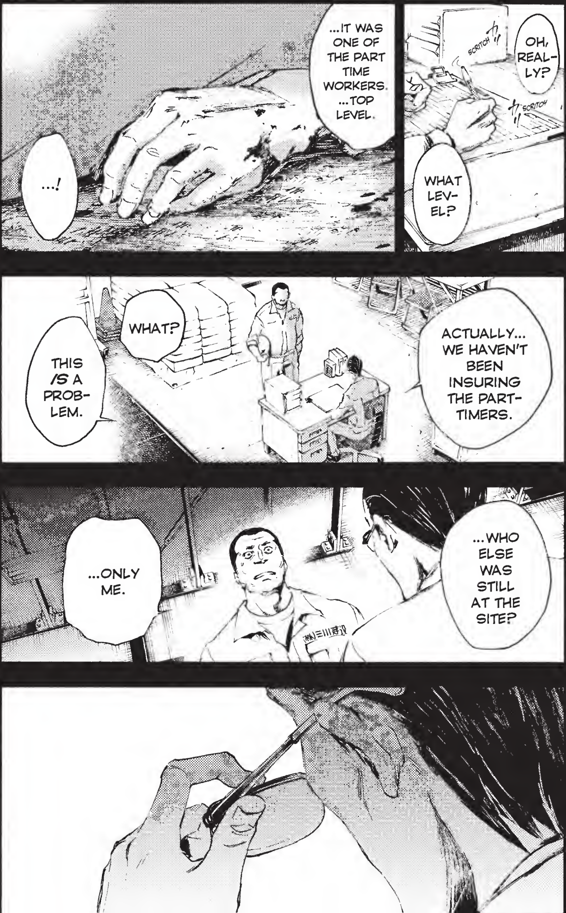

SAVE THAT FOR TOMORROW!
IT'S NOT SAFE UP THERE—IT'S TOO DARK!
THAT'S OKAY! I'M JUST GOING TO PUT THESE DOWN!
THANKS!
NO PROBLEM.
slip
ズル

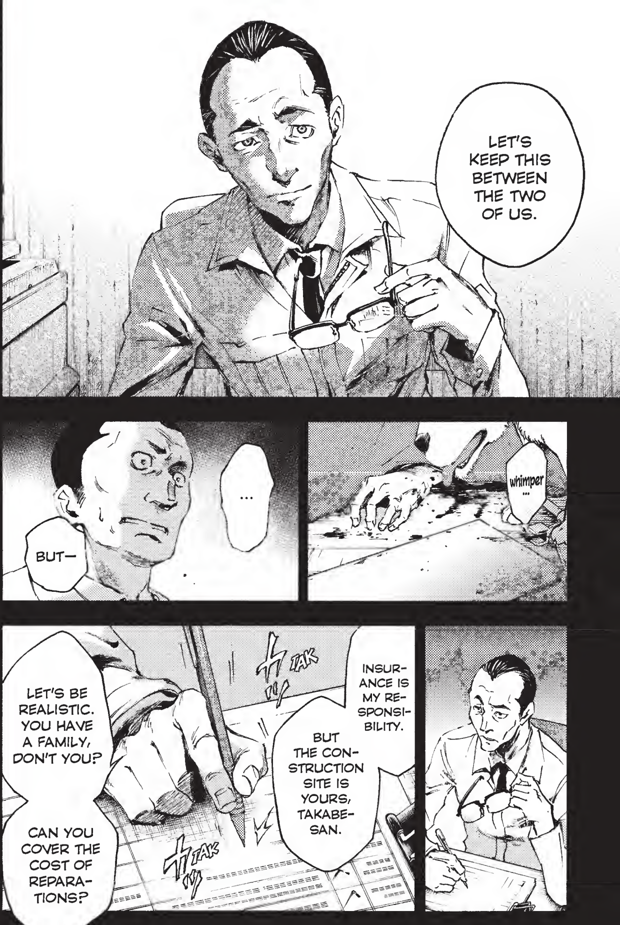

どさっ
THUD
KA-CLANG CLANG
...A YOUNG MAN.

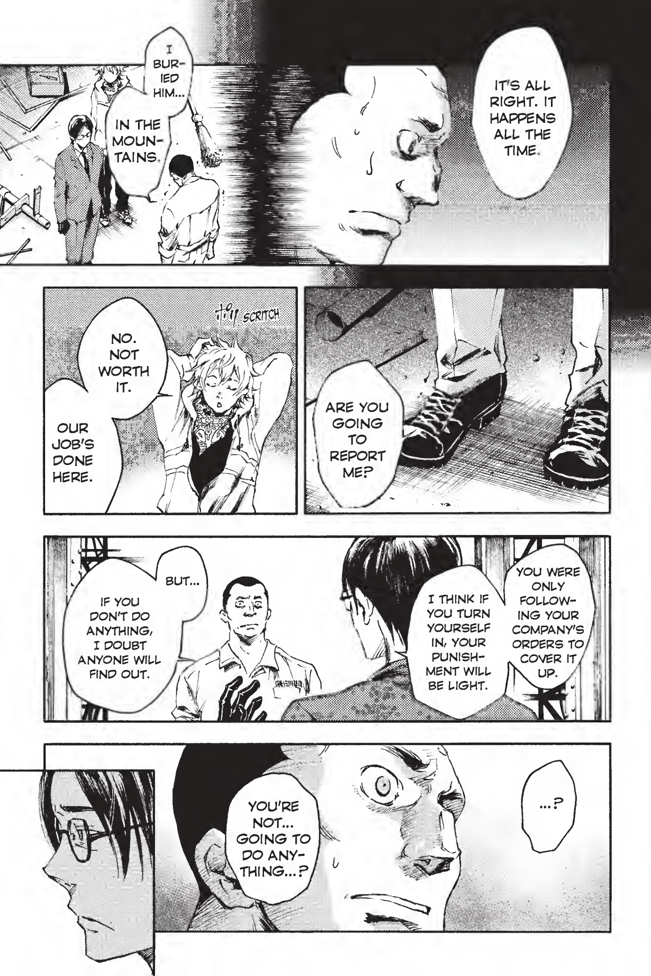

?!
OOF
HE TOOK A WRONG STEP...
IT HAPPENED UP THERE, RIGHT?
YOU WERE WORKING DOWN BELOW.
HOW... DO YOU KNOW THAT?
WERE YOU WATCHING...?
NO... WELL, YES.
THE TRUTH IS, I SAW IT JUST NOW.
...IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT.
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.

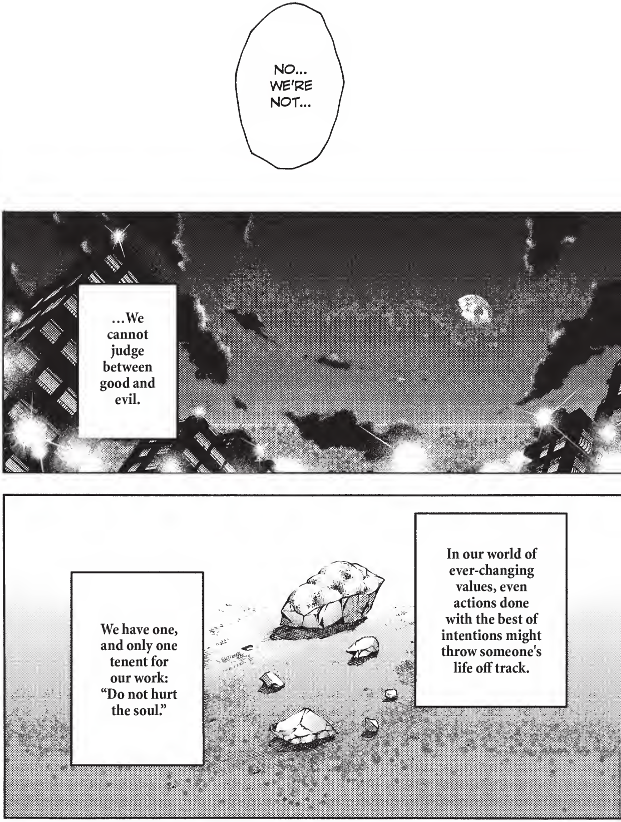

KA-CLANG
カラン
...HNN.
NN... HNNH!
...I DIDN'T... HAVE A CHOICE.
ガラ
RATTLE
THANKS FOR COMING TODAY.
...YAMADA-SAN, I'M SORRY.
THERE'S BEEN...AN ACCIDENT.

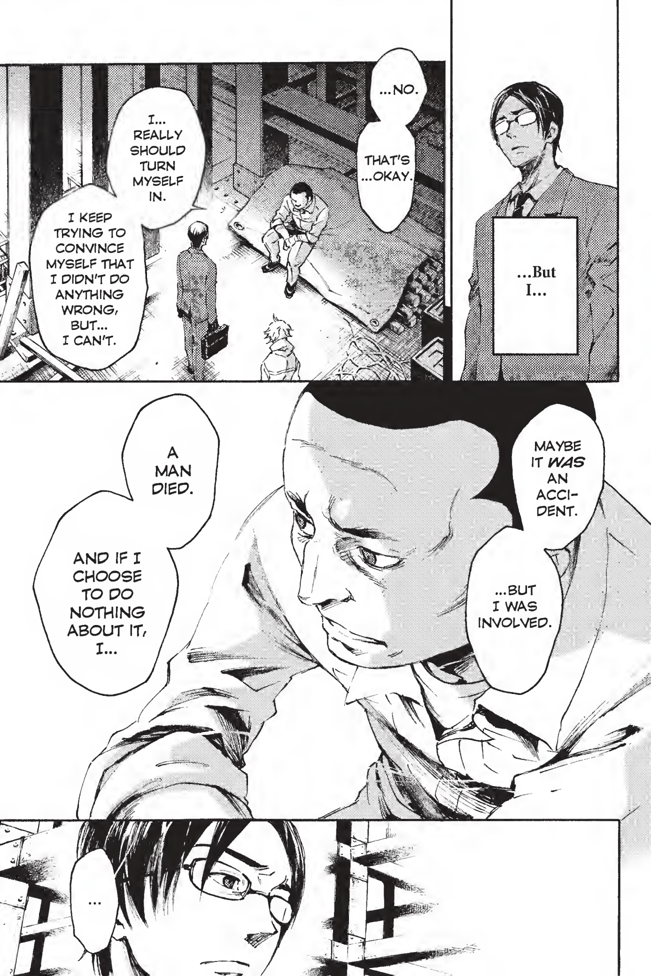
SHIRT: Mikawa Construction, Inc.

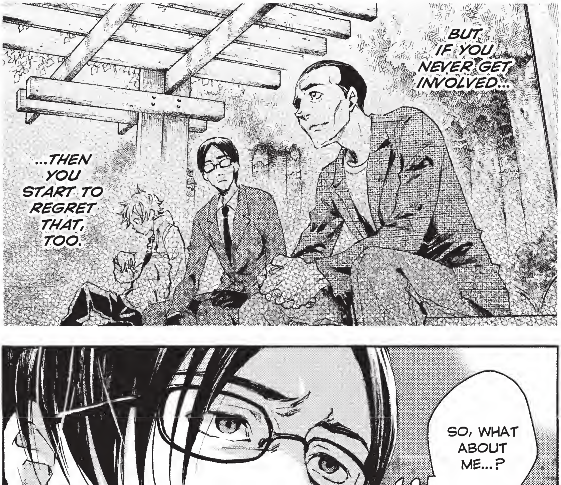

OH, REAL-LY?
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
WHAT LEV-EL?
...IT WAS ONE OF THE PART TIME WORKERS. ...TOP LEVEL.
...!
ACTUALLY... WE HAVEN'T BEEN INSURING THE PART-TIMERS.
WHAT?
THIS *IS* A PROB-LEM.
...WHO ELSE WAS STILL AT THE SITE?
...ONLY ME.
(株)三川建設

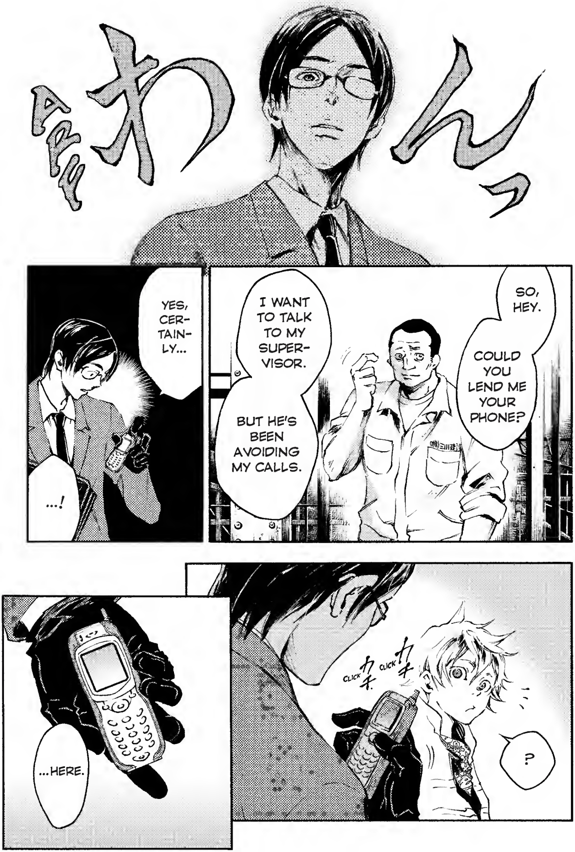

LET'S KEEP THIS BETWEEN THE TWO OF US.
whimper ...
...
BUT—
INSURANCE IS MY RESPONSIBILITY.
BUT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE IS YOURS, TAKABE-SAN.
TAK
LET'S BE REALISTIC. YOU HAVE A FAMILY, DON'T YOU?
CAN YOU COVER THE COST OF REPARATIONS?
TAK

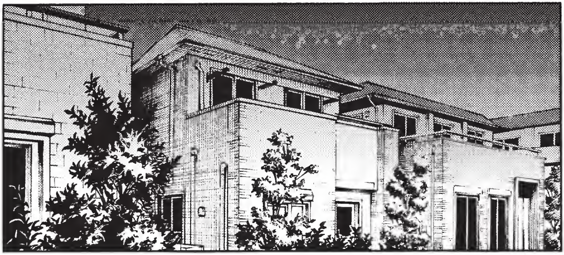

IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME.
I BURIED HIM...
IN THE MOUNTAINS.
ARE YOU GOING TO REPORT ME?
SCRITCH
NO. NOT WORTH IT.
OUR JOB'S DONE HERE.
YOU WERE ONLY FOLLOWING YOUR COMPANY'S ORDERS TO COVER IT UP.
I THINK IF YOU TURN YOURSELF IN, YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE LIGHT.
BUT...
IF YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING, I DOUBT ANYONE WILL FIND OUT.
...?
YOU'RE NOT... GOING TO DO ANYTHING...?

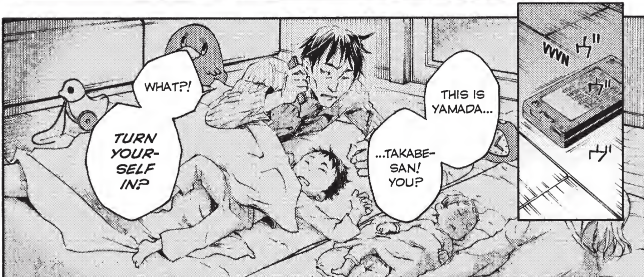

NO... WE'RE NOT...
...We cannot judge between good and evil.
In our world of ever-changing values, even actions done with the best of intentions might throw someone's life off track.
We have one, and only one tenent for our work: "Do not hurt the soul."

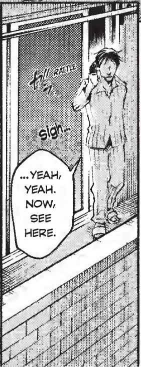

...But I...
...NO.
THAT'S ...OKAY.
I... REALLY SHOULD TURN MYSELF IN.
I KEEP TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG, BUT... I CAN'T.
MAYBE IT *WAS* AN ACCIDENT.
...BUT I WAS INVOLVED.
A MAN DIED.
AND IF I CHOOSE TO DO NOTHING ABOUT IT, I...
...

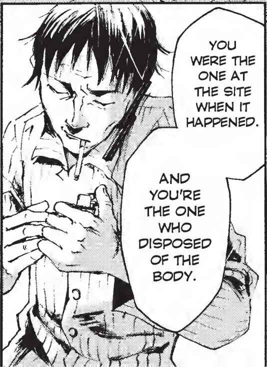

BUT, IF YOU NEVER GET INVOLVED...
...THEN YOU START TO REGRET THAT, TOO.
SO, WHAT ABOUT ME...?
わんっ
ARF
!
わんっ
ARF
わん
ARF

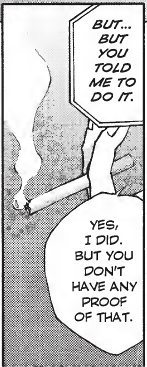

ARF
わんっ
SO, HEY.
COULD YOU LEND ME YOUR PHONE?
I WANT TO TALK TO MY SUPERVISOR.
BUT HE'S BEEN AVOIDING MY CALLS.
YES, CERTAINLY...
...!
CLICK カチ
CLICK カチ
?
...HERE.

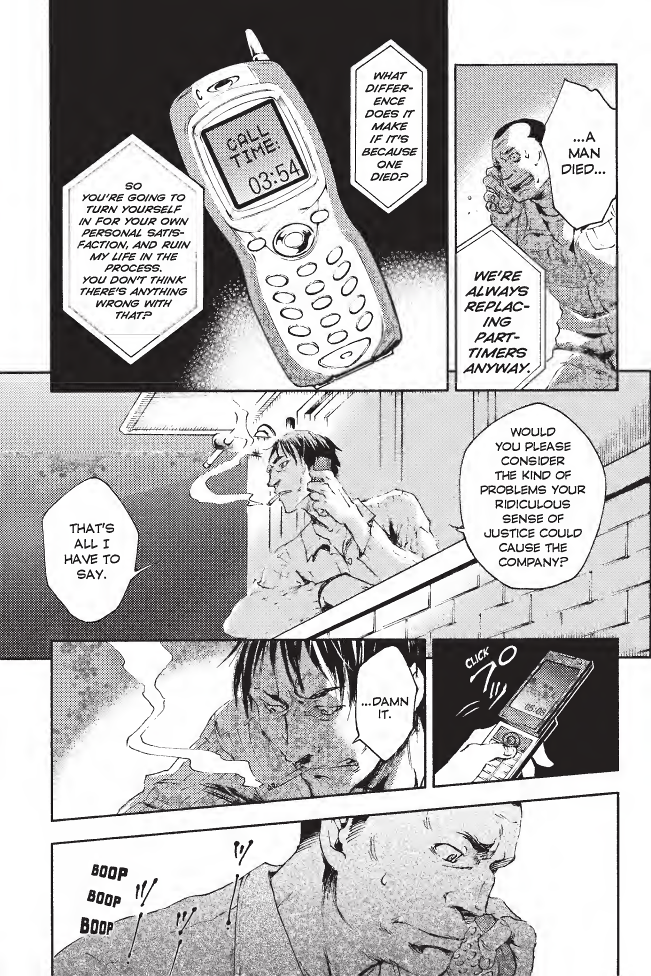


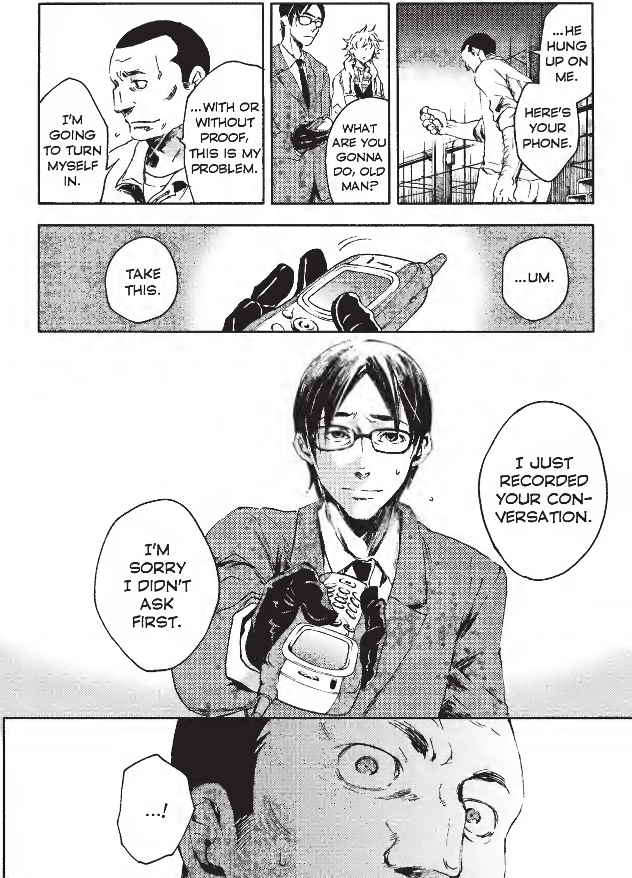

VVVN
ヴ
ヴ
ヴ
THIS IS YAMADA...
...TAKABE-SAN! YOU?
WHAT?!
TURN YOURSELF IN?

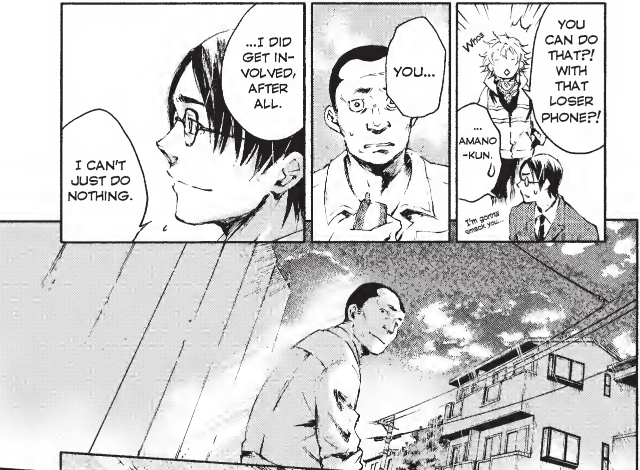

ガラ RATTLE
Sigh...
...YEAH, YEAH. NOW, SEE HERE.

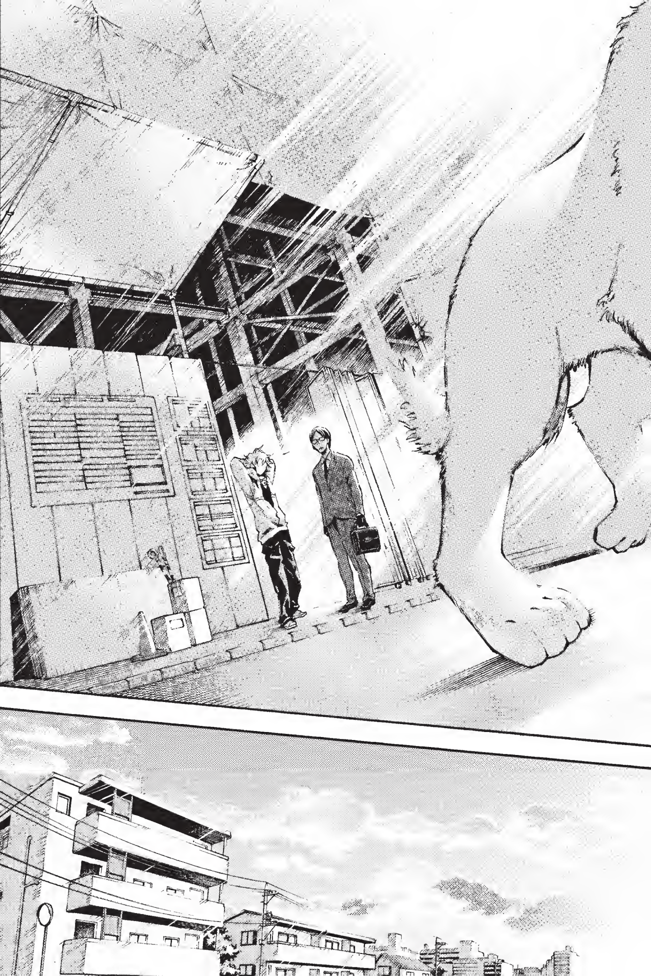

YOU WERE THE ONE AT THE SITE WHEN IT HAPPENED.
AND YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DISPOSED OF THE BODY.

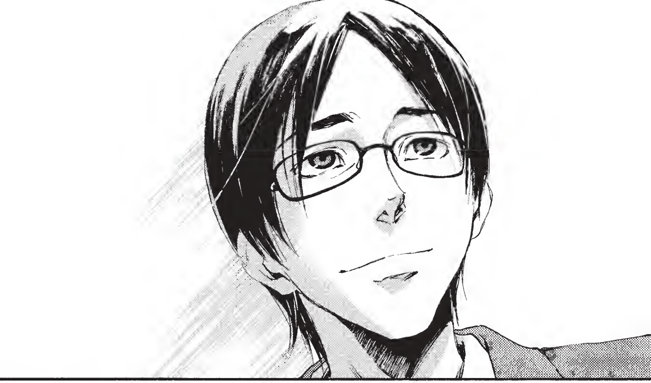

BUT... BUT YOU TOLD ME TO DO IT.
YES, I DID. BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF OF THAT.

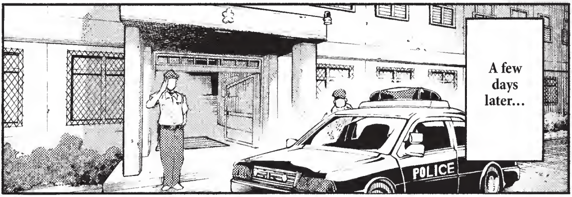

...A MAN DIED...
WE'RE ALWAYS REPLACING PART-TIMERS ANYWAY.
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF IT'S BECAUSE ONE DIED?
CALL TIME: 03:54
SO YOU'RE GOING TO TURN YOURSELF IN FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL SATISFACTION, AND RUIN MY LIFE IN THE PROCESS. YOU DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT?
WOULD YOU PLEASE CONSIDER THE KIND OF PROBLEMS YOUR RIDICULOUS SENSE OF JUSTICE COULD CAUSE THE COMPANY?
THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY.
CLICK
...DAMN IT.
BOOP
BOOP
BOOP

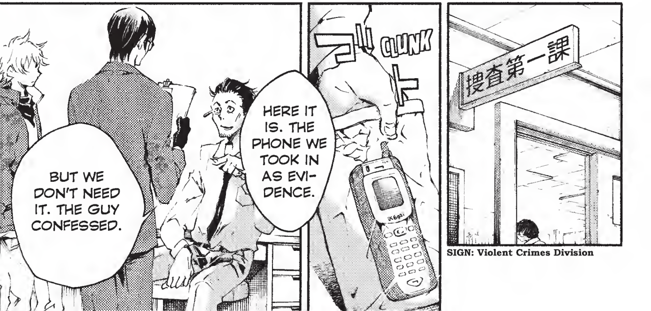

...HE HUNG UP ON ME.
HERE'S YOUR PHONE.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO, OLD MAN?
...WITH OR WITHOUT PROOF, THIS IS MY PROBLEM.
I'M GOING TO TURN MYSELF IN.
...UM.
TAKE THIS.
I JUST RECORDED YOUR CONVERSATION.
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T ASK FIRST.
...!


Whoa
YOU CAN DO THAT?! WITH THAT LOSER PHONE?!
...AMANO-KUN.
I'm gonna smack you...
YOU...
...I DID GET INVOLVED, AFTER ALL.
I CAN'T JUST DO NOTHING.
GETTING INVOLVED WITH PEOPLE...
WAS THAT REALLY A GOOD IDEA?
わんっ
ARF

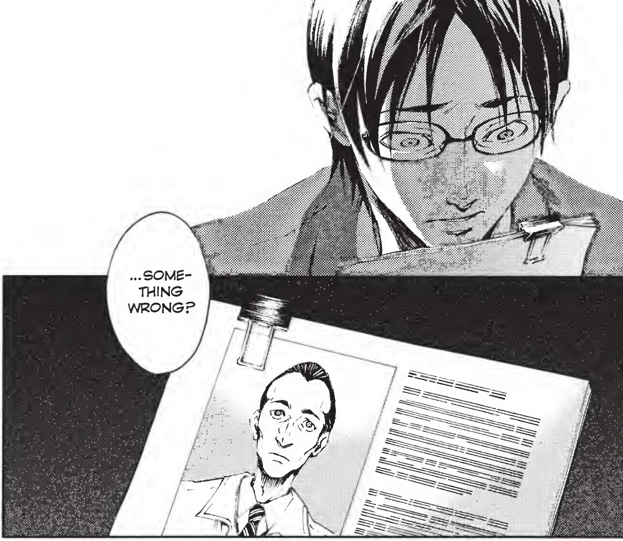


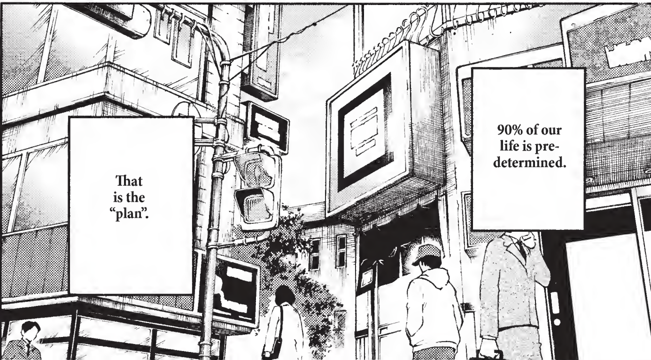


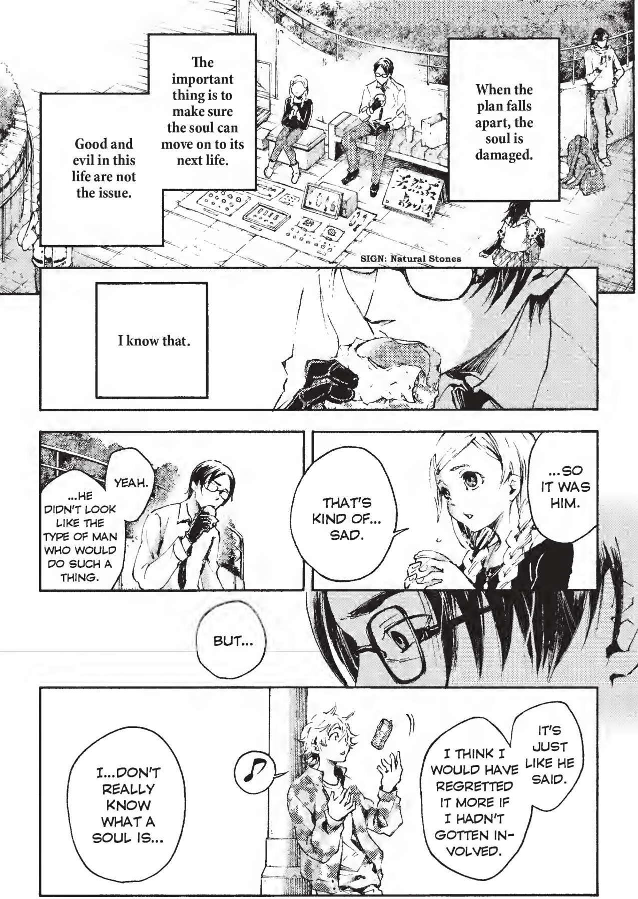

A few days later…
POLICE

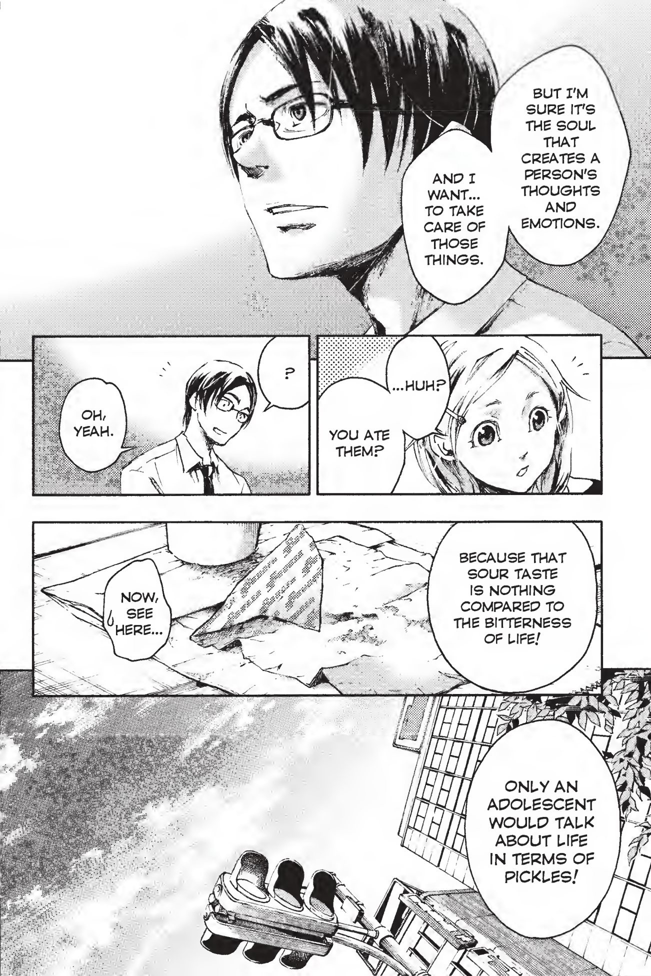

捜査第一課
CLUNK
HERE IT IS. THE PHONE WE TOOK IN AS EVIDENCE.
BUT WE DON'T NEED IT. THE GUY CONFESSED.

SIGN: Violent Crimes Division


...SOMETHING WRONG?


90% of our life is predetermined.
That is the "plan".


When the plan falls apart, the soul is damaged.
The important thing is to make sure the soul can move on to its next life.
Good and evil in this life are not the issue.
SIGN: Natural Stones
I know that.
...SO IT WAS HIM.
THAT'S KIND OF... SAD.
YEAH.
...HE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE TYPE OF MAN WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING.
BUT...
IT'S JUST LIKE HE SAID.
I THINK I WOULD HAVE REGRETTED IT MORE IF I HADN'T GOTTEN INVOLVED.
♪
I...DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT A SOUL IS...


BUT I'M SURE IT'S THE SOUL THAT CREATES A PERSON'S THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS.
AND I WANT... TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE THINGS.
...HUH?
YOU ATE THEM?
?
OH, YEAH.
BECAUSE THAT SOUR TASTE IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE BITTERNESS OF LIFE!
NOW, SEE HERE...
ONLY AN ADOLESCENT WOULD TALK ABOUT LIFE IN TERMS OF PICKLES!

From the playwright

Whenever I see flowers by a guardrail on the road, the reality of someone's death leaps into my heart. I don't know the person who died, so I don't feel anything in particular, but as long as there's someone there who prays for that person, I'm not going to go kicking those flowers. That is a special place. As Amano says in the story, there's nothing there anymore. The body was taken to the hospital, cremated, and buried in the cemetery. Nevertheless, people leave flowers at the scene of the accident. I wonder why that is. Is it because that was the last place that person existed in life? I don't know the reason, but I understand the sentiment. If you take away the flowers, and no one knows the reality of what happened there, then there is nothing special about that place.

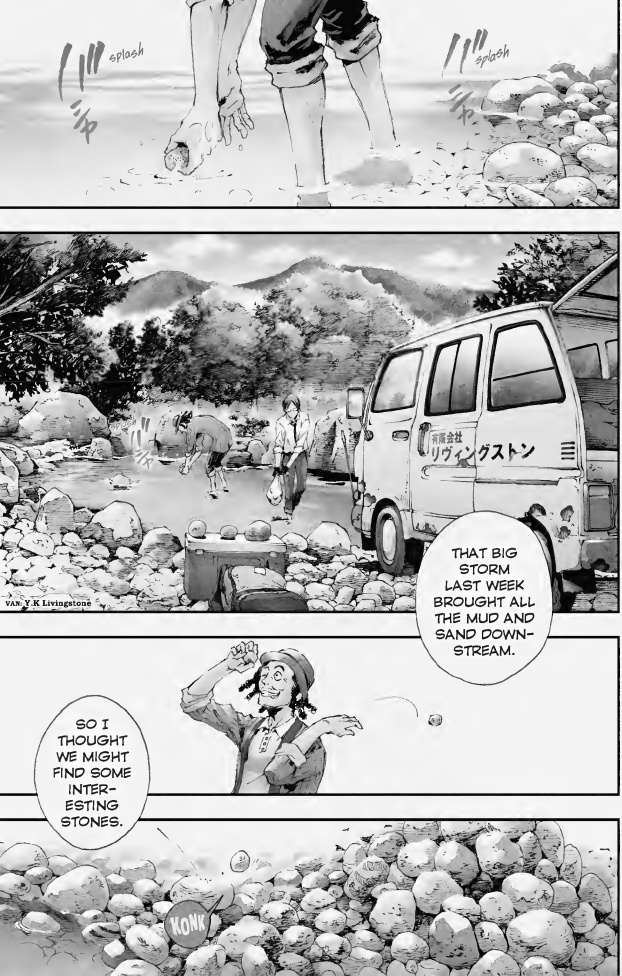
In other words, the “stains” may be nothing more than people's feelings. If that's the case, then our lives are covered in stains like that, which come into being and then are forgotten and disappear. Maybe you could say that a memorial service is the business of keeping those stains around. In that case, then I guess what Amano is doing is erasing memories. One of the themes of this story is “memories.” If you refer to them as “information” instead, they begin to sound like little more than dry facts. However, for the people affected, that “information” is connected to their emotions, which makes them into memories. I think that Amano and Sakurai are always bickering because of the lack of motivation brought about by that difference between “information” and “memories.” This manga is based on a short play, and I am the playwright.

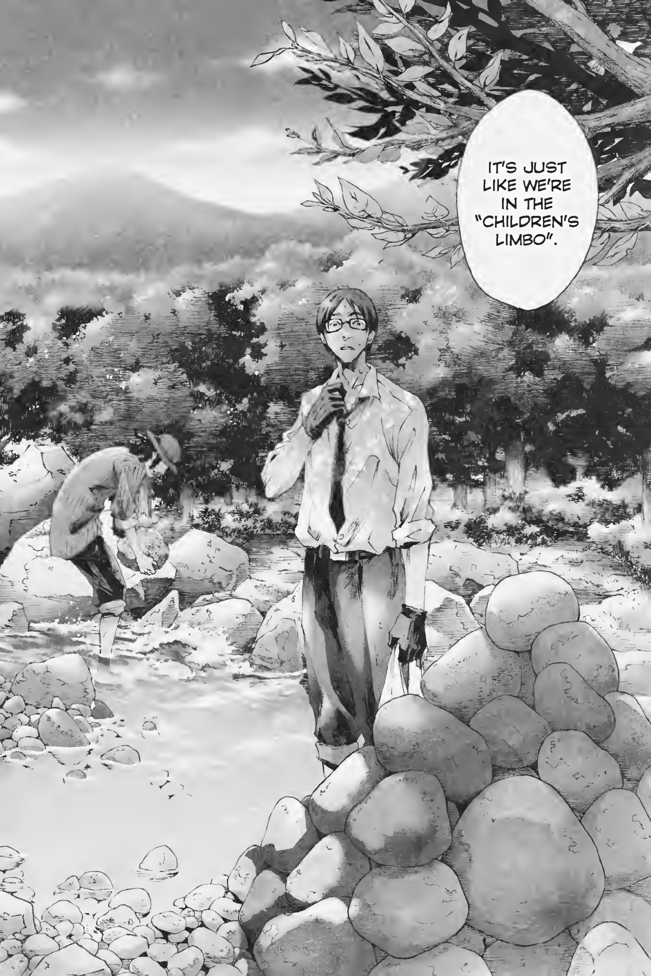
Tomohiro Maekawa
From Niigata prefecture.
Chairman of the Ikiume theatre troupe, he works as a writer and producer.

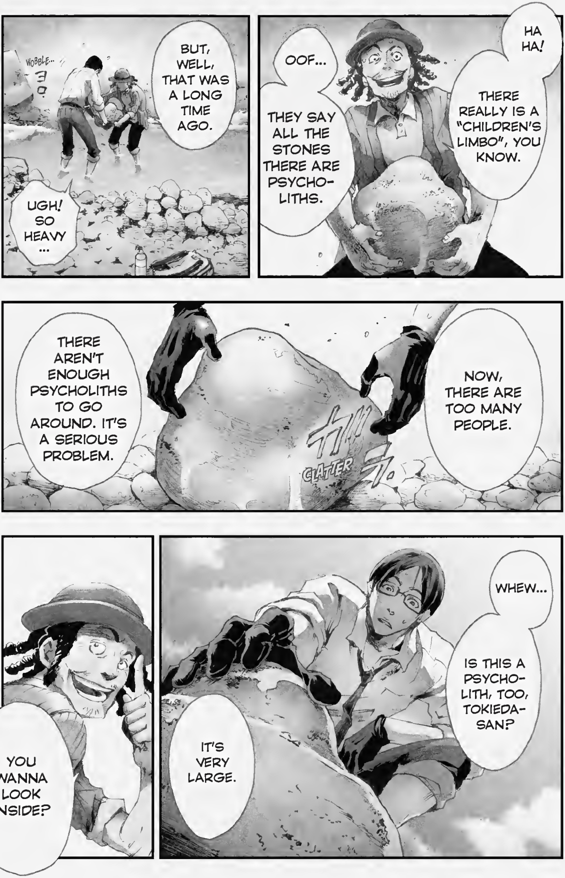
His major works include *Sanpo Suru Shinryukusha [The Invader Takes a Walk], Kansū Domino [Function Domino], Omote to Ura to Sono Mukō [Front, Back, and Beyond].*

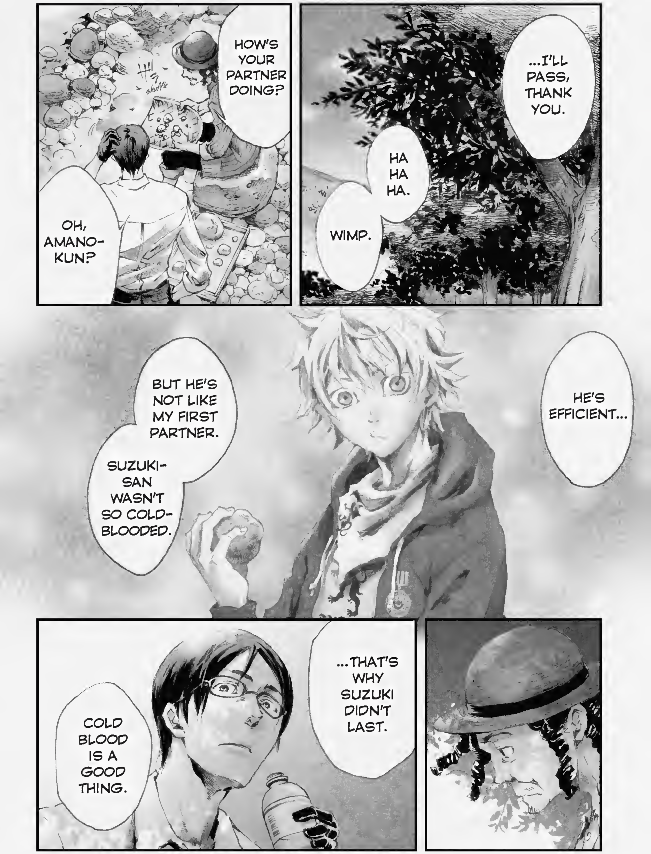
Shorter works include *Toshokan-Teki Jinsei [Library-Like Life], Purankuton no Odoriba [Plankton Landing], Kikkai [Mysterious], and others.*

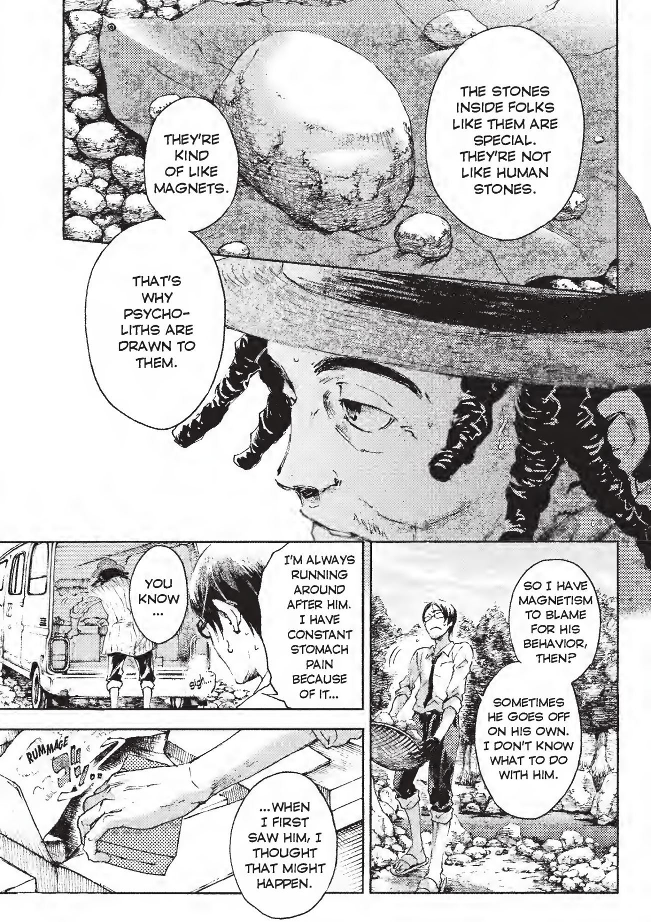
Chapter 3 ✚ Game Start

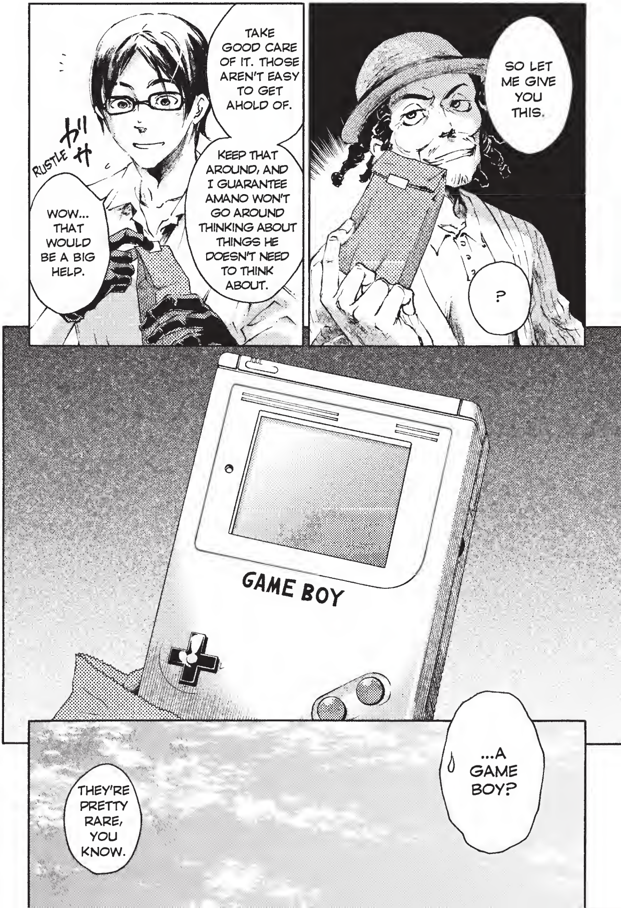

バシャ
splash
バシャ
splash
有限会社
リヴィングストン
VAN: Y.K Livingstone
バシャ
splash
THAT BIG STORM LAST WEEK BROUGHT ALL THE MUD AND SAND DOWNSTREAM.
SO I THOUGHT WE MIGHT FIND SOME INTERESTING STONES.
KONK

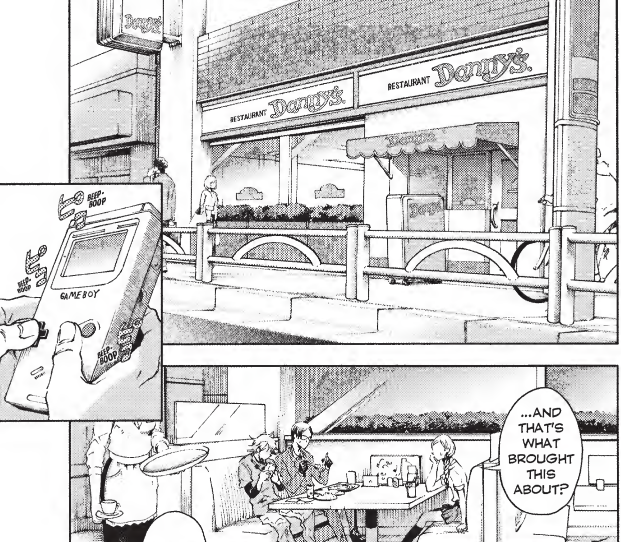

IT'S JUST LIKE WE'RE IN THE "CHILDREN'S LIMBO".

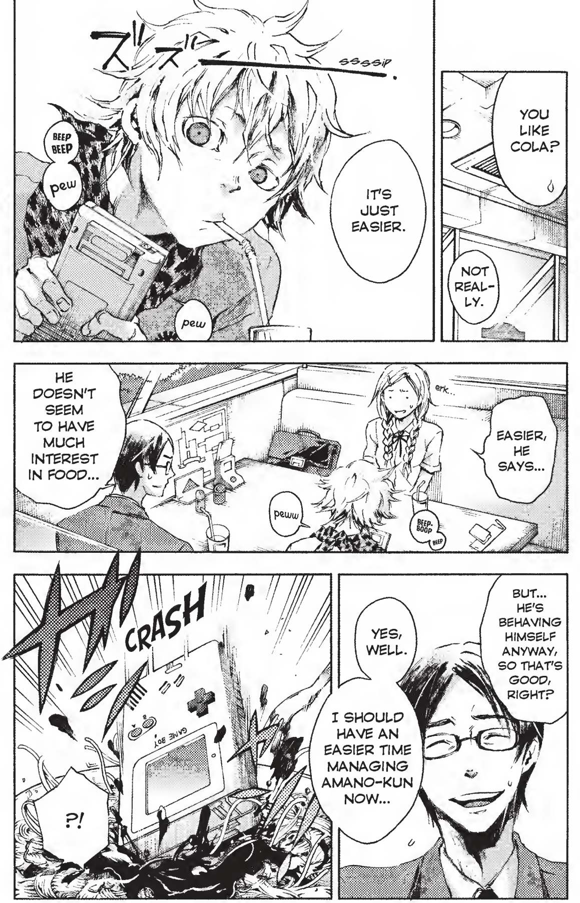

HA HA!
THERE REALLY IS A "CHILDREN'S LIMBO", YOU KNOW.
OOF...
THEY SAY ALL THE STONES THERE ARE PSYCHOLITHS.
BUT, WELL, THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
WOBBLE... ヨロ
UGH! SO HEAVY...
NOW, THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE.
CLATTER
THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PSYCHOLITHS TO GO AROUND. IT'S A SERIOUS PROBLEM.
WHEW...
IS THIS A PSYCHOLITH, TOO, TOKIEDA-SAN?
IT'S VERY LARGE.
YOU WANNA LOOK INSIDE?

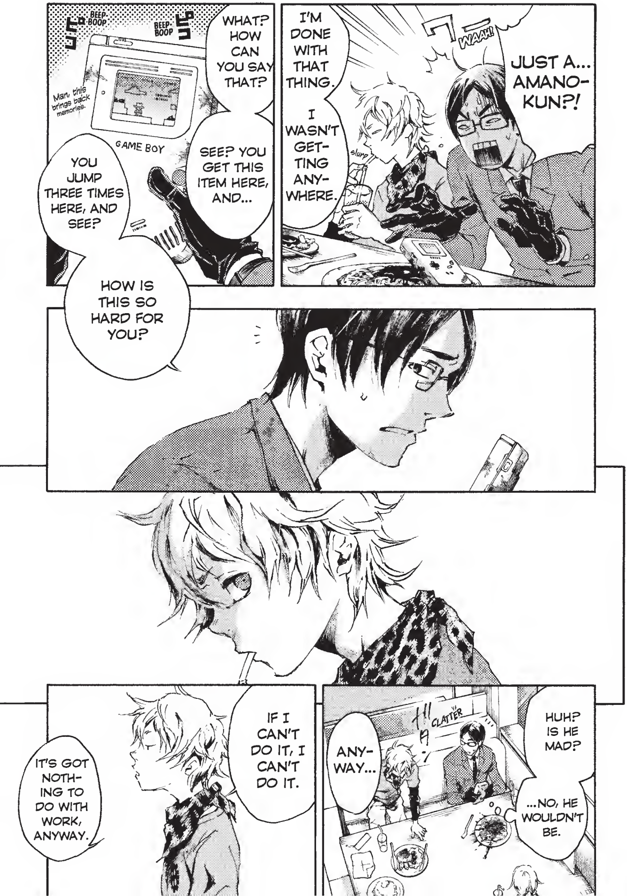

...I'LL PASS, THANK YOU.
HA HA HA.
WIMP.
HOW'S YOUR PARTNER DOING?
shuffle
OH, AMANO-KUN?
HE'S EFFICIENT...
BUT HE'S NOT LIKE MY FIRST PARTNER.
SUZUKI-SAN WASN'T SO COLD-BLOODED.
...THAT'S WHY SUZUKI DIDN'T LAST.
COLD BLOOD IS A GOOD THING.

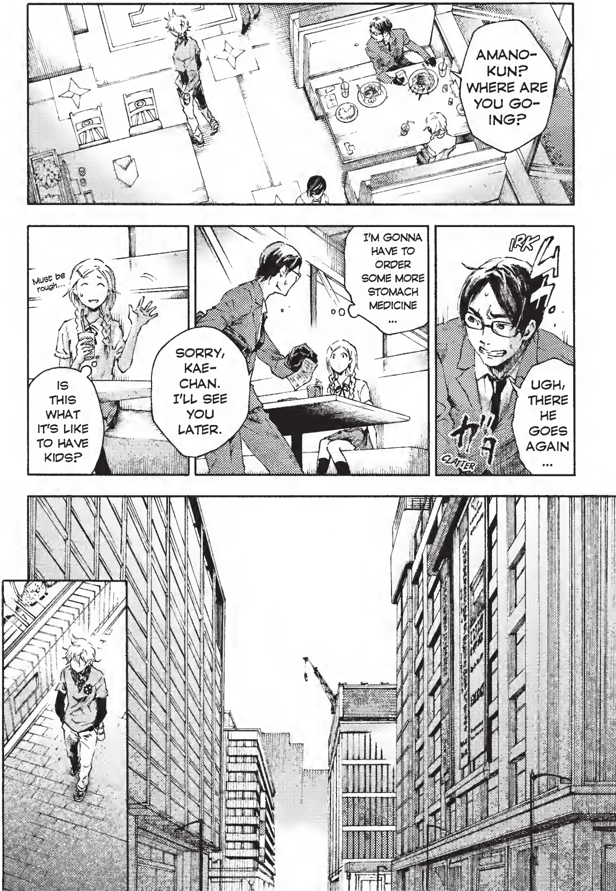

THE STONES INSIDE FOLKS LIKE THEM ARE SPECIAL. THEY'RE NOT LIKE HUMAN STONES.
THEY'RE KIND OF LIKE MAGNETS.
THAT'S WHY PSYCHOLITHS ARE DRAWN TO THEM.
SO I HAVE MAGNETISM TO BLAME FOR HIS BEHAVIOR, THEN?
SOMETIMES HE GOES OFF ON HIS OWN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIM.
I'M ALWAYS RUNNING AROUND AFTER HIM. I HAVE CONSTANT STOMACH PAIN BECAUSE OF IT...
sigh...
YOU KNOW...
RUMMAGE
...WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM, I THOUGHT THAT MIGHT HAPPEN.

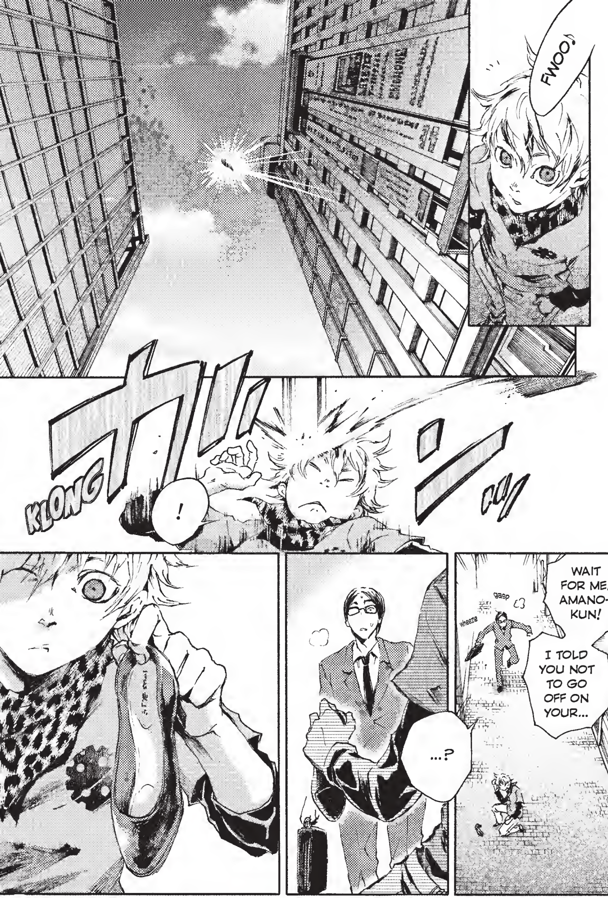

SO LET ME GIVE YOU THIS.
?
TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT. THOSE AREN'T EASY TO GET AHOLD OF.
KEEP THAT AROUND, AND I GUARANTEE AMANO WON'T GO AROUND THINKING ABOUT THINGS HE DOESN'T NEED TO THINK ABOUT.
ガサ
RUSTLE
WOW... THAT WOULD BE A BIG HELP.
GAME BOY
...A GAME BOY?
THEY'RE PRETTY RARE, YOU KNOW.

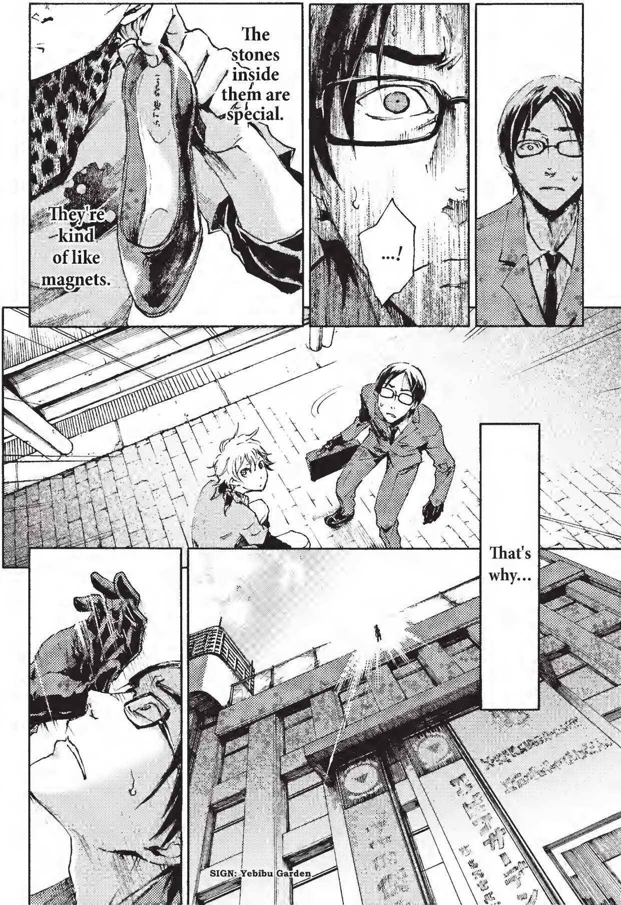

RESTAURANT Danny's
RESTAURANT Danny's
Danny's
Danny's
Danny's
BEEP-BOOP
BEEP-BOOP
GAME BOY
BEEP-BOOP
...AND THAT'S WHAT BROUGHT THIS ABOUT?
YES...
OH, HONESTLY ...
WHAT'S MY DAD DOING WITH A GAME BOY IN THIS DAY AND AGE?
AMANO-KUN. YOUR SALISBURY STEAK'S GETTING COLD.
sssip
I'M EATING.
BEEP-BOOP
BEEP-BOOP

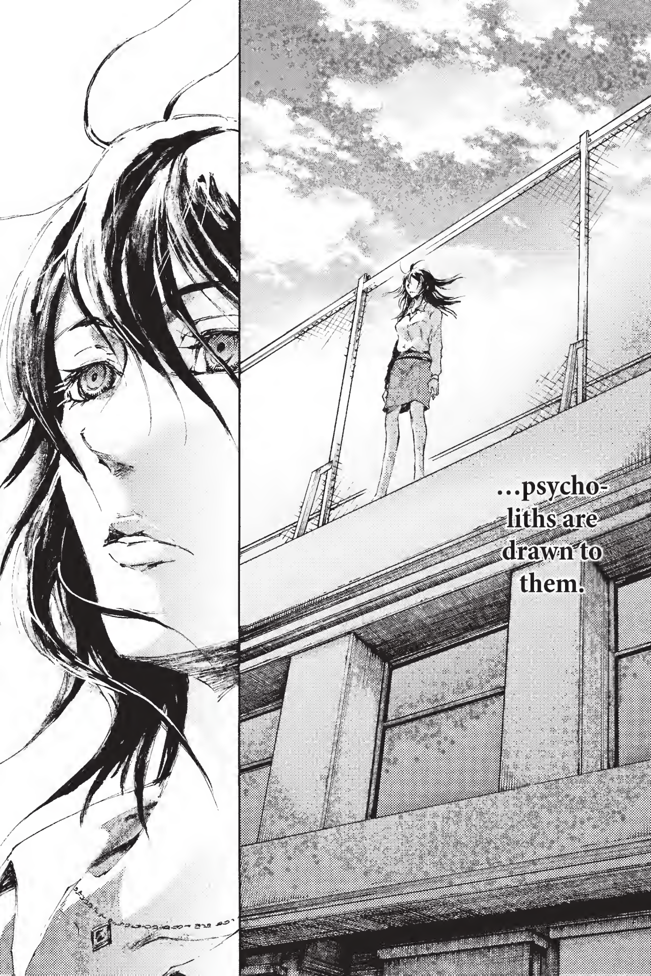

YOU LIKE COLA?
NOT REALLY.
ズズ
ssssip
IT'S JUST EASIER.
BEEP BEEP
pew
pew
erk...
EASIER, HE SAYS...
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE MUCH INTEREST IN FOOD...
peww
BEEP. BOOP
BEEP
BUT... HE'S BEHAVING HIMSELF ANYWAY, SO THAT'S GOOD, RIGHT?
YES, WELL.
I SHOULD HAVE AN EASIER TIME MANAGING AMANO-KUN NOW...
CRASH
GAME BOY
?!

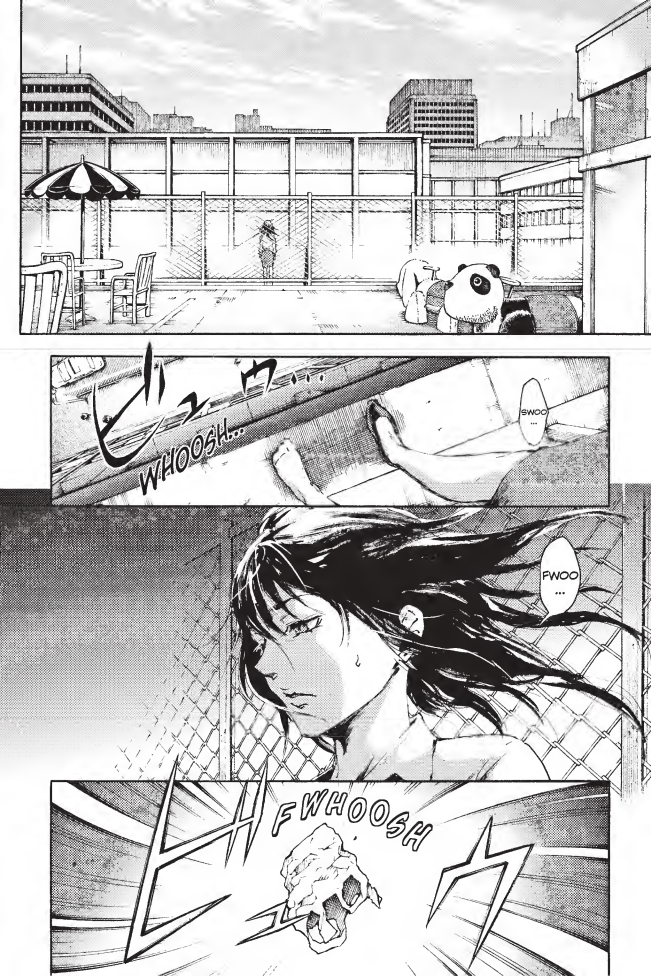

WAAH!
JUST A... AMANO-KUN?!
I'M DONE WITH THAT THING.
I WASN'T GETTING ANYWHERE.
slurp
BEEP-BOOP
BEEP-BOOP
WHAT? HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
Man, this brings back memories.
GAME BOY
SEE? YOU GET THIS ITEM HERE, AND...
YOU JUMP THREE TIMES HERE, AND SEE?
HOW IS THIS SO HARD FOR YOU?
HUH? IS HE MAD?
CLATTER
...NO, HE WOULDN'T BE.
ANYWAY...
IF I CAN'T DO IT, I CAN'T DO IT.
IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH WORK, ANYWAY.

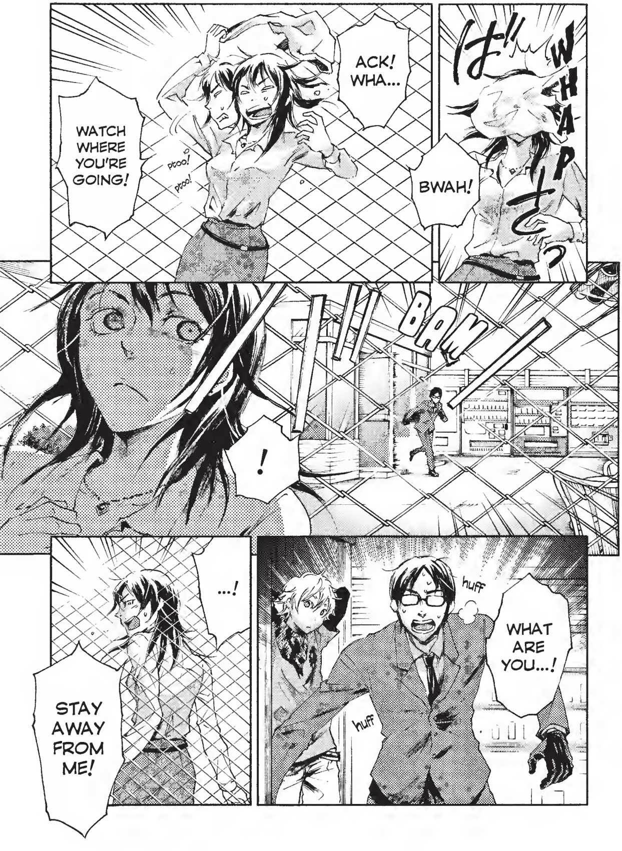

AMANO-KUN? WHERE ARE YOU GO-ING?
IRK
UGH, THERE HE GOES AGAIN ...
ガタ
CLATTER
I'M GONNA HAVE TO ORDER SOME MORE STOMACH MEDICINE ...
SORRY, KAE-CHAN. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
Must be rough...
IS THIS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE KIDS?

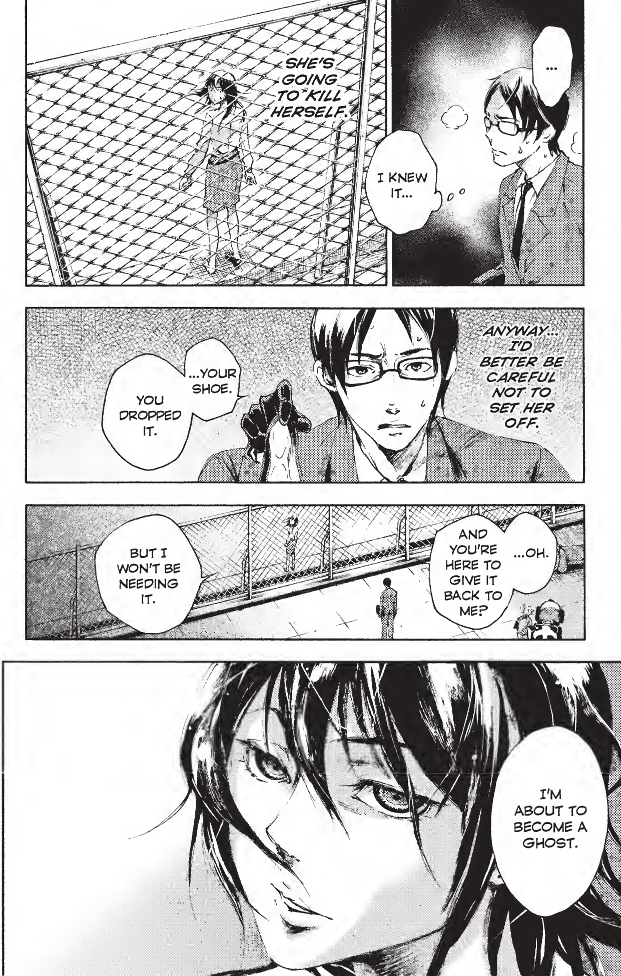

FWOO♪
KLONG
!
WAIT FOR ME, AMANO-KUN!
gasp
wheeze
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO OFF ON YOUR...
...?

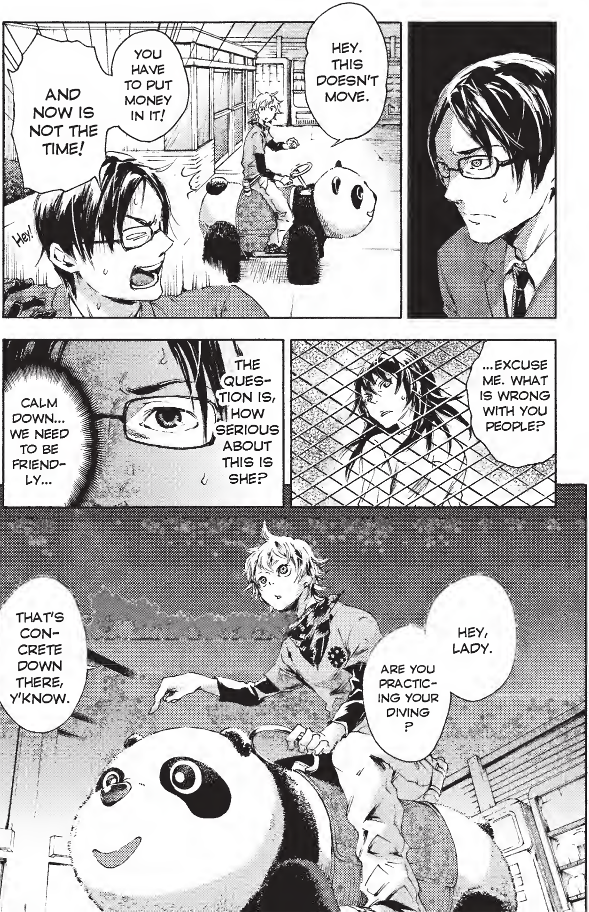

...!
The stones inside them are special.
They're kind of like magnets.
That's why...
SIGN: Yebibu Garden

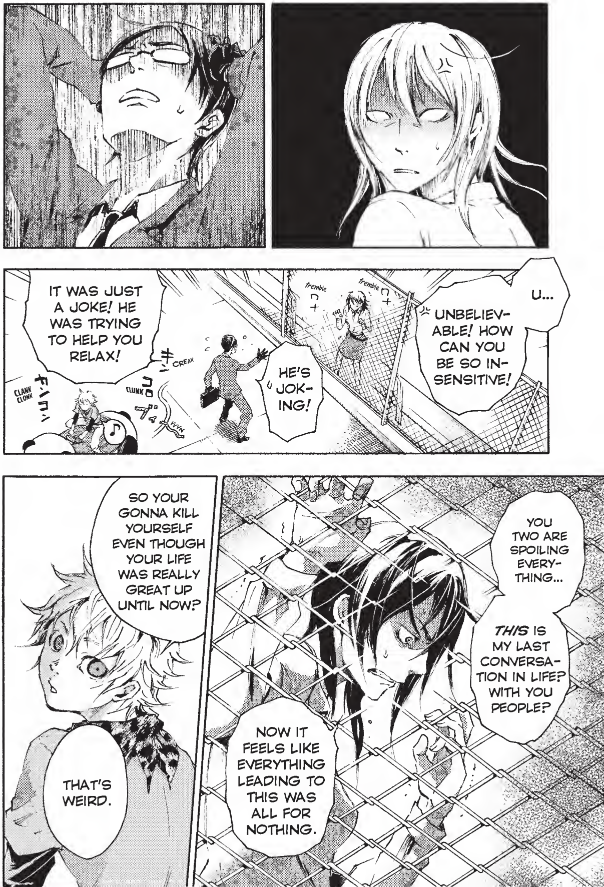

…psycholiths are drawn to them.

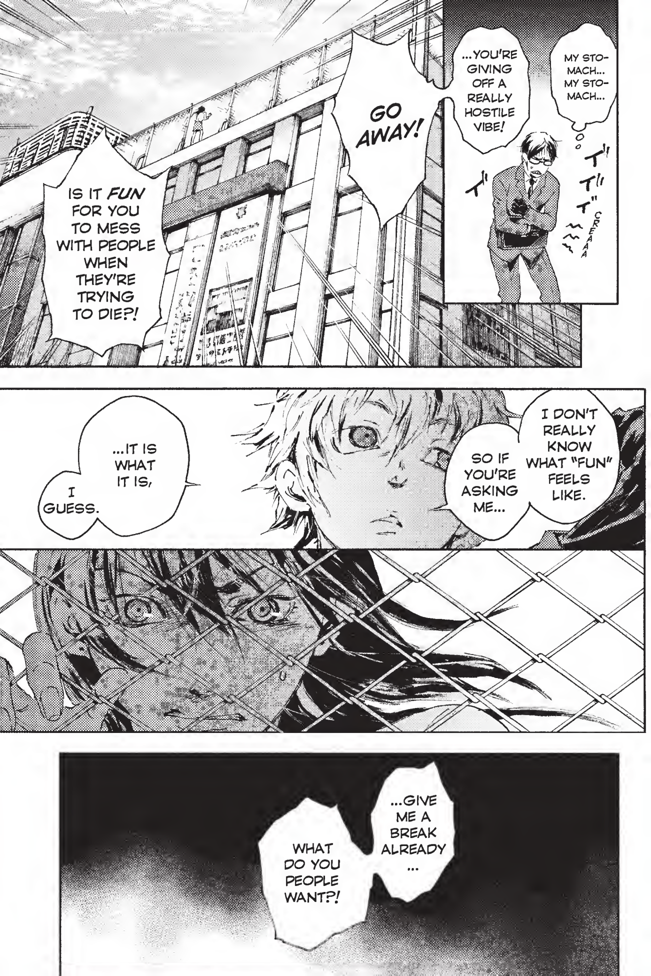

SWOO
...
ビュウ...
WHOOSH...
FWOO
...
ヒュウ
FWHOOSH

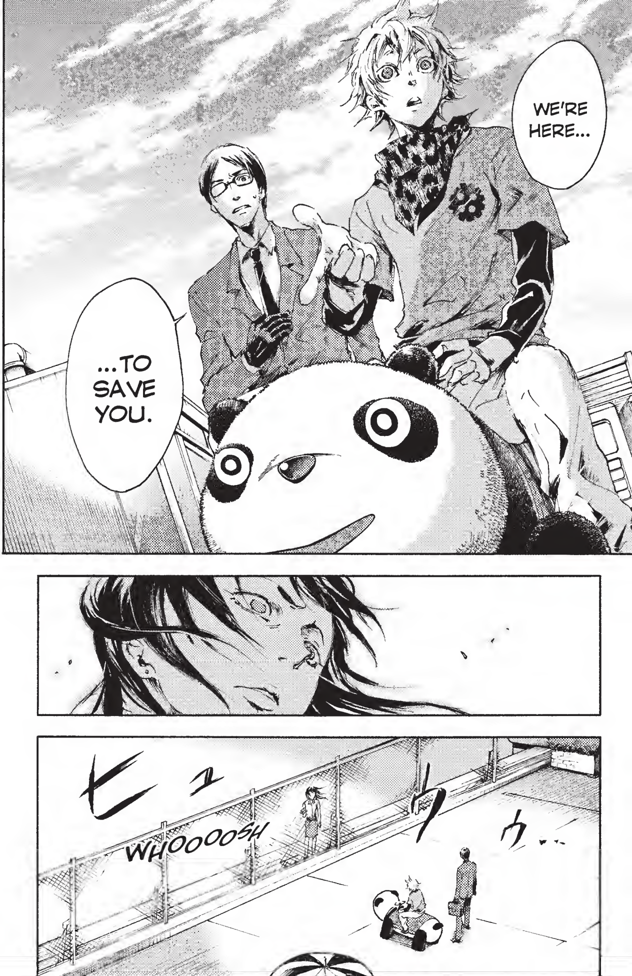

ば
WHAP
さっ
BWAH!
ACK! WHA...
ptoo! ptoo!
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
BAM
!
huff
WHAT ARE YOU...!
huff
...!
STAY AWAY FROM ME!

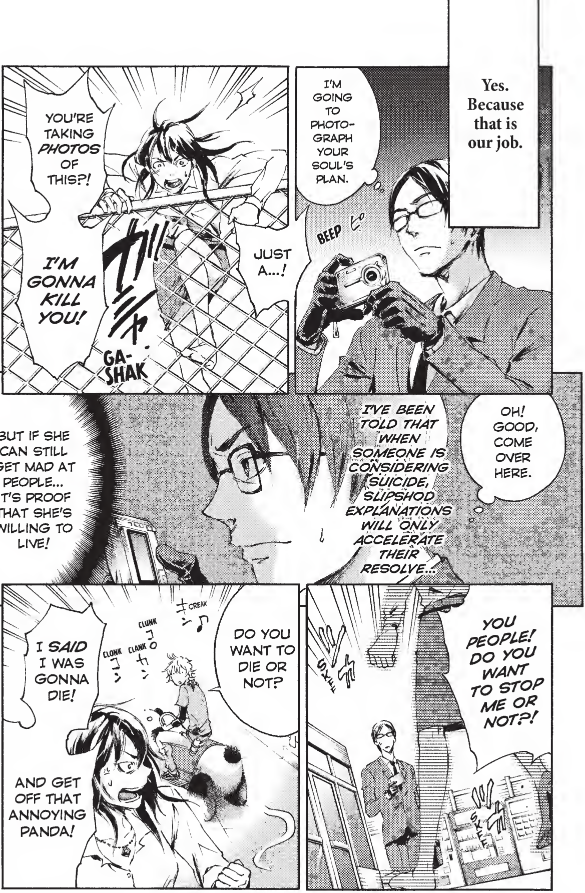

...
I KNEW IT...
SHE'S GOING TO KILL HERSELF.
ANYWAY... I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL NOT TO SET HER OFF.
...YOUR SHOE.
YOU DROPPED IT.
...OH.
AND YOU'RE HERE TO GIVE IT BACK TO ME?
BUT I WON'T BE NEEDING IT.
I'M ABOUT TO BECOME A GHOST.

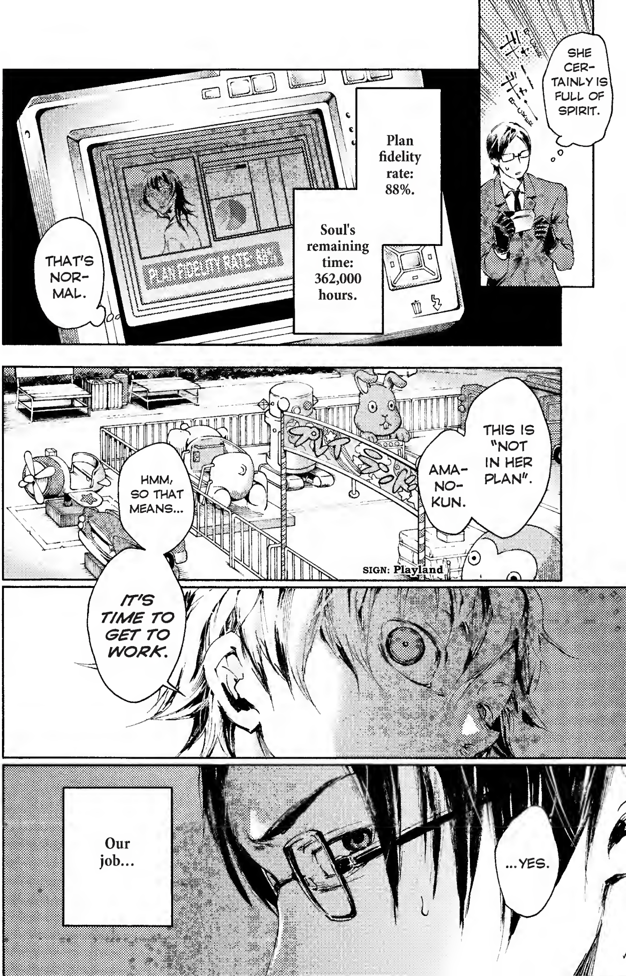

HEY. THIS DOESN'T MOVE.
YOU HAVE TO PUT MONEY IN IT!
AND NOW IS NOT THE TIME!
Hey!
...EXCUSE ME. WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
THE QUESTION IS, HOW SERIOUS ABOUT THIS IS SHE?
CALM DOWN... WE NEED TO BE FRIENDLY...
HEY, LADY.
ARE YOU PRACTICING YOUR DIVING?
THAT'S CONCRETE DOWN THERE, Y'KNOW.

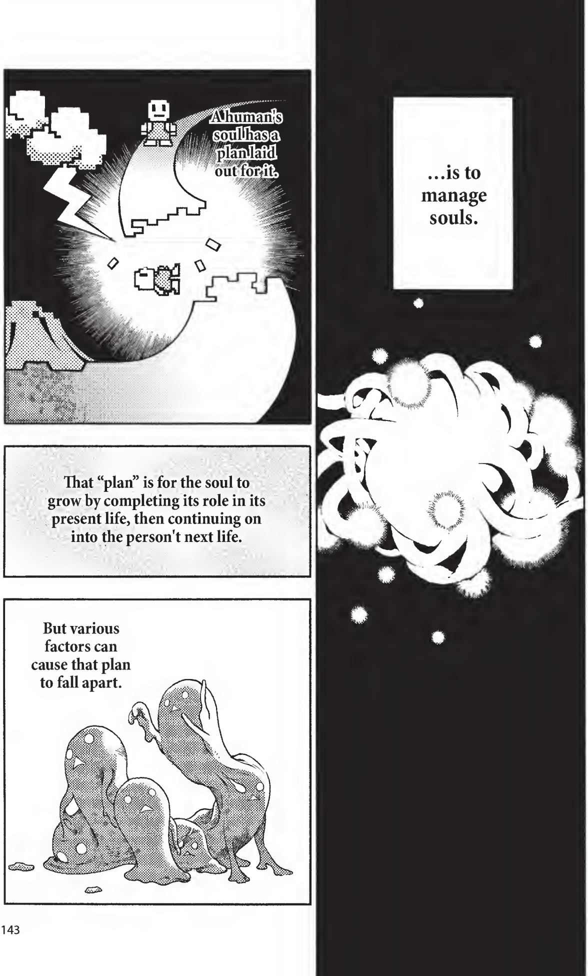

U...
UNBELIEVABLE! HOW CAN YOU BE SO INSENSITIVE!
tremble
tremble
HE'S JOKING!
CREAK
CLUNK
WYYN
IT WAS JUST A JOKE! HE WAS TRYING TO HELP YOU RELAX!
CLANK CLONK
YOU TWO ARE SPOILING EVERYTHING...
THIS IS MY LAST CONVERSATION IN LIFE? WITH YOU PEOPLE?
NOW IT FEELS LIKE EVERYTHING LEADING TO THIS WAS ALL FOR NOTHING.
SO YOUR GONNA KILL YOURSELF EVEN THOUGH YOUR LIFE WAS REALLY GREAT UP UNTIL NOW?
THAT'S WEIRD.

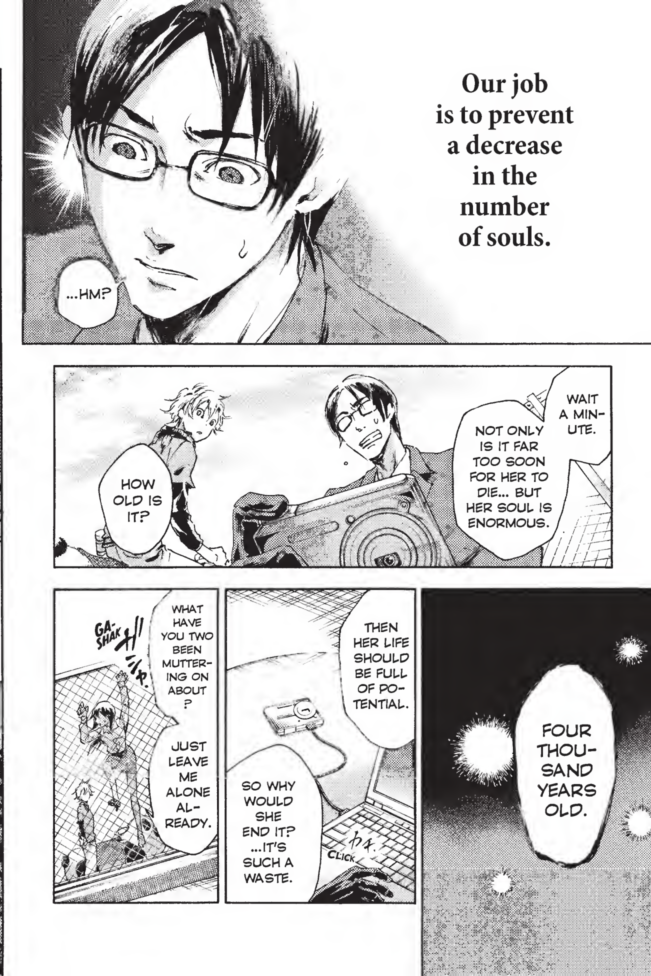

MY STOMACH... MY STOMACH...
...YOU'RE GIVING OFF A REALLY HOSTILE VIBE!
CREAAA
GO AWAY!
IS IT *FUN* FOR YOU TO MESS WITH PEOPLE WHEN THEY'RE TRYING TO DIE?!
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT "FUN" FEELS LIKE.
SO IF YOU'RE ASKING ME...
...IT IS WHAT IT IS,
I GUESS.
...GIVE ME A BREAK ALREADY...
WHAT DO YOU PEOPLE WANT?!

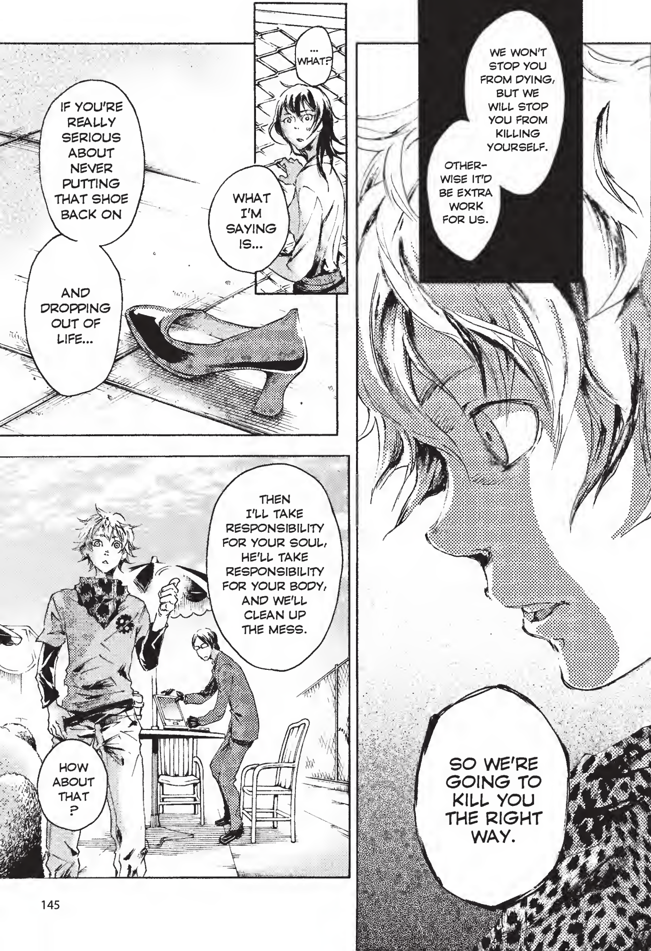

WE'RE HERE...
...TO SAVE YOU.
ヒュウウ...
WHOOOOSH

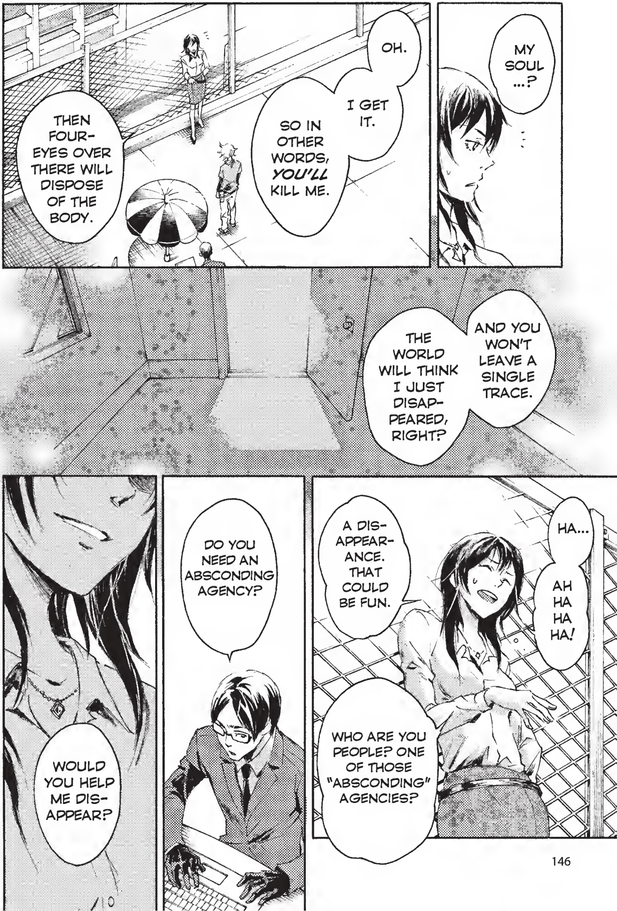

Yes. Because that is our job.
I'M GOING TO PHOTOGRAPH YOUR SOUL'S PLAN.
BEEP ピ
JUST A...!
YOU'RE TAKING *PHOTOS* OF THIS?!
I'M GONNA KILL YOU!
ガシャ
GA-SHAK
OH! GOOD, COME OVER HERE.
I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT WHEN SOMEONE IS CONSIDERING SUICIDE, SLIPSHOD EXPLANATIONS WILL ONLY ACCELERATE THEIR RESOLVE...
BUT IF SHE CAN STILL GET MAD AT PEOPLE... IT'S PROOF THAT SHE'S WILLING TO LIVE!
YOU PEOPLE! DO YOU WANT TO STOP ME OR NOT?!
SKFF
SKFF
DO YOU WANT TO DIE OR NOT?
CREAK
CLUNK
CLANK
CLONK
I *SAID* I WAS GONNA DIE!
AND GET OFF THAT ANNOYING PANDA!

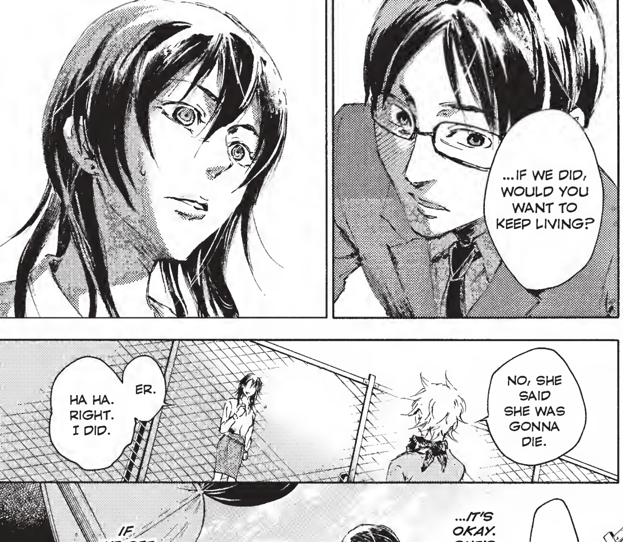

SHE CERTAINLY IS FULL OF SPIRIT.
Plan fidelity rate: 88%.
Soul's remaining time: 362,000 hours.
PLAN FIDELITY RATE: 88%
THAT'S NORMAL.
THIS IS "NOT IN HER PLAN".
AMANO-KUN.
HMM, SO THAT MEANS...
SIGN: Playland
IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK.
...YES.
Our job...

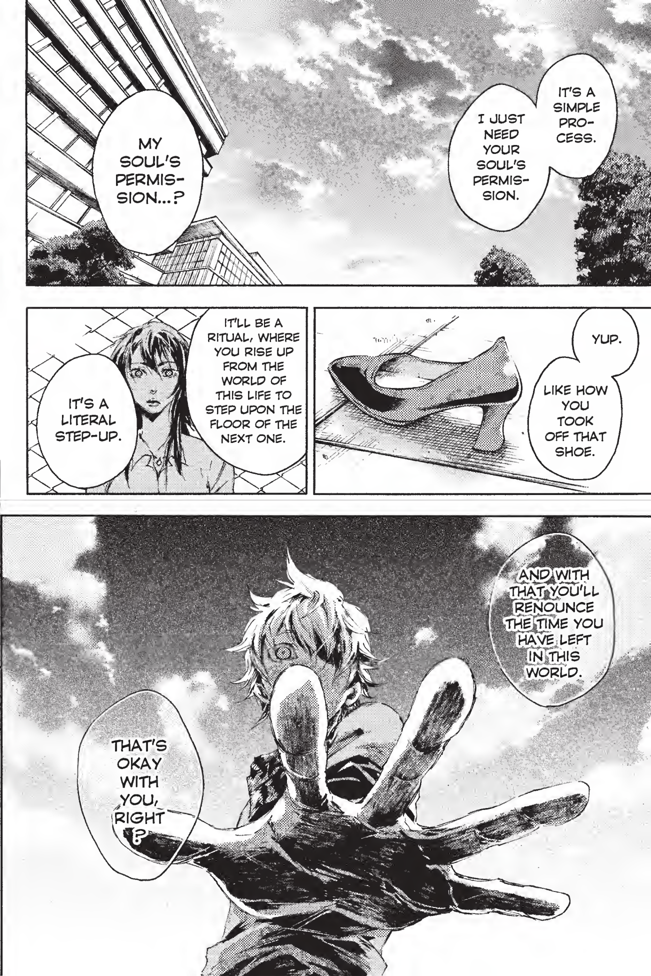

...is to manage souls.
A human's soul has a plan laid out for it.
That "plan" is for the soul to grow by completing its role in its present life, then continuing on into the person't next life.
But various factors can cause that plan to fall apart.

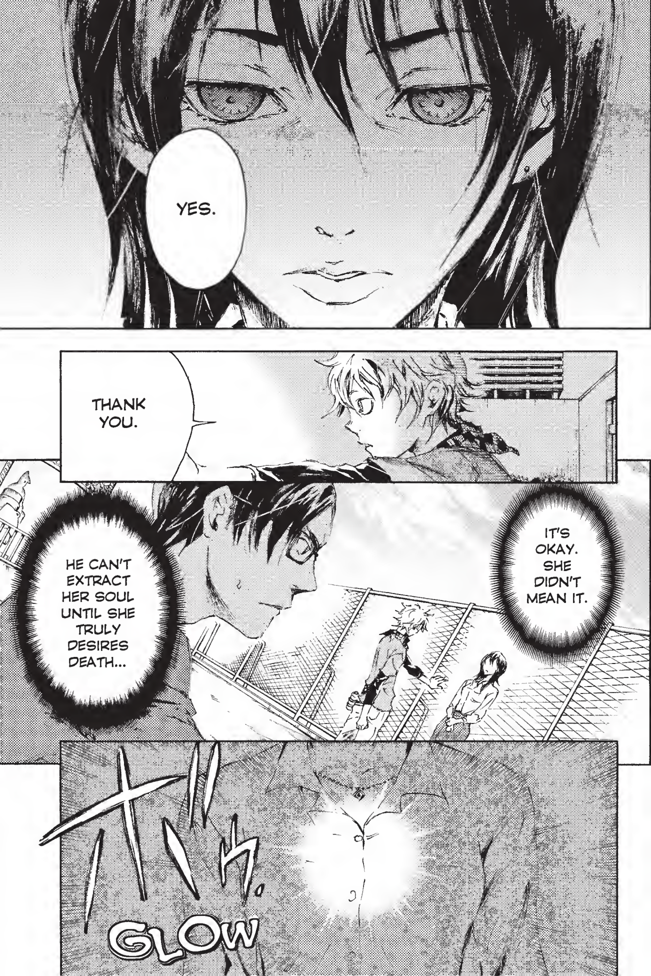

Our job is to prevent a decrease in the number of souls.
...HM?
WAIT A MINUTE.
NOT ONLY IS IT FAR TOO SOON FOR HER TO DIE... BUT HER SOUL IS ENORMOUS.
HOW OLD IS IT?
FOUR THOUSAND YEARS OLD.
THEN HER LIFE SHOULD BE FULL OF POTENTIAL.
SO WHY WOULD SHE END IT? ...IT'S SUCH A WASTE.
CLICK
GA-SHAK
WHAT HAVE YOU TWO BEEN MUTTERING ON ABOUT?
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE ALREADY.

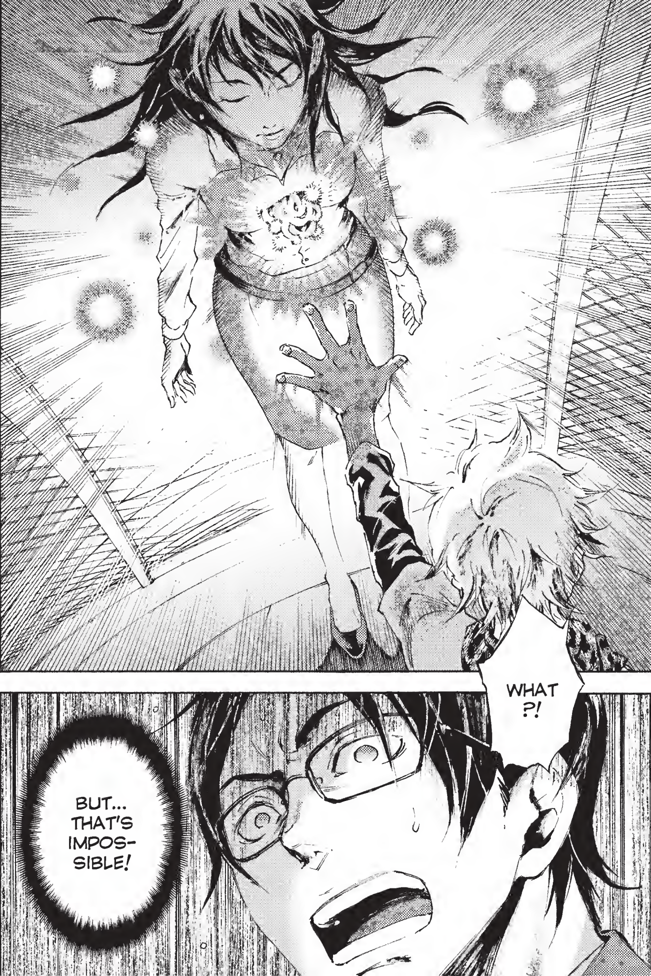

IF YOU'RE REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT NEVER PUTTING THAT SHOE BACK ON
AND DROPPING OUT OF LIFE...
WHAT I'M SAYING IS...
... WHAT?
THEN I'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR SOUL, HE'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR BODY, AND WE'LL CLEAN UP THE MESS.
HOW ABOUT THAT?
WE WON'T STOP YOU FROM DYING, BUT WE WILL STOP YOU FROM KILLING YOURSELF.
OTHER-WISE IT'D BE EXTRA WORK FOR US.
SO WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU THE RIGHT WAY.


MY SOUL ...?
OH.
I GET IT.
SO IN OTHER WORDS, *YOU'LL* KILL ME.
THEN FOUR-EYES OVER THERE WILL DISPOSE OF THE BODY.
AND YOU WON'T LEAVE A SINGLE TRACE.
THE WORLD WILL THINK I JUST DISAPPEARED, RIGHT?
HA...
AH HA HA HA!
A DISAPPEARANCE. THAT COULD BE FUN.
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE? ONE OF THOSE "ABSCONDING" AGENCIES?
DO YOU NEED AN ABSCONDING AGENCY?
WOULD YOU HELP ME DISAPPEAR?

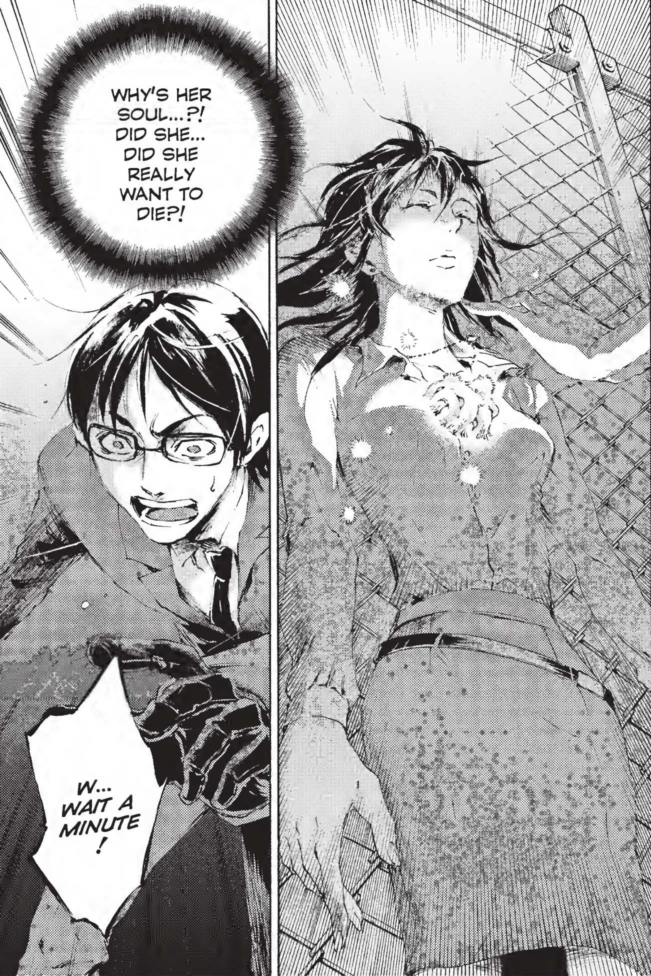

...IF WE DID, WOULD YOU WANT TO KEEP LIVING?
NO, SHE SAID SHE WAS GONNA DIE.
ER.
HA HA. RIGHT. I DID.
...
...IT'S OKAY. SHE'S CALMING DOWN.
SHE'S STILL LOOKING FOR A REASON TO LIVE.
IF WE GET HER TO RETHINK IT FOR A SECOND, HER SOUL SHOULDN'T MAKE THAT SAME CHOICE AGAIN.
IF YOU'RE WILLING TO DIE, I COULD KILL YOU RIGHT NOW.
IT WON'T HURT AT ALL.
HMM...
THAT *WOULD* BE EVERYTHING I HOPED FOR, BUT...

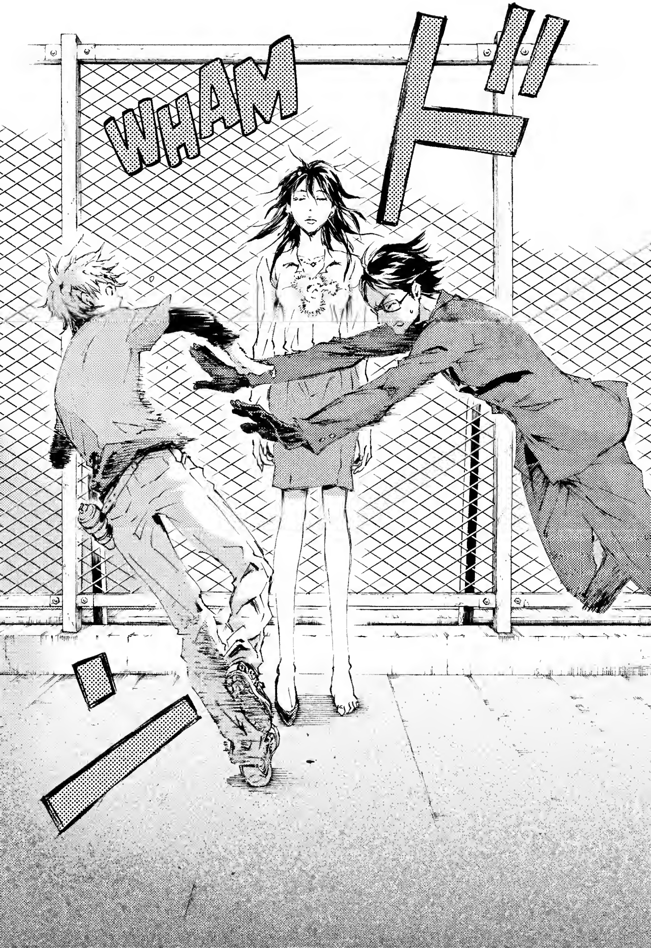

IT'S A SIMPLE PROCESS.
I JUST NEED YOUR SOUL'S PERMISSION.
MY SOUL'S PERMISSION...?
YUP.
LIKE HOW YOU TOOK OFF THAT SHOE.
IT'LL BE A RITUAL, WHERE YOU RISE UP FROM THE WORLD OF THIS LIFE TO STEP UPON THE FLOOR OF THE NEXT ONE.
IT'S A LITERAL STEP-UP.
AND WITH THAT YOU'LL RENOUNCE THE TIME YOU HAVE LEFT IN THIS WORLD.
THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU, RIGHT?

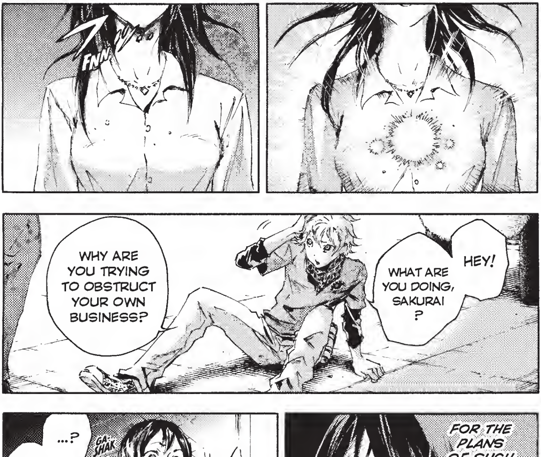

YES.
THANK YOU.
IT'S OKAY. SHE DIDN'T MEAN IT.
HE CAN'T EXTRACT HER SOUL UNTIL SHE TRULY DESIRES DEATH...
GLOW

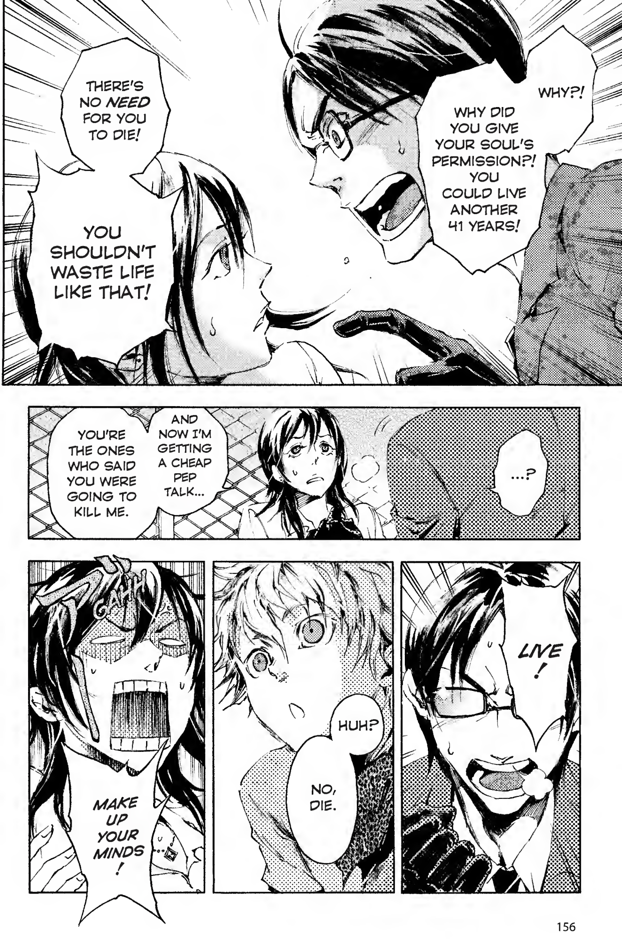

WHAT ?!
BUT... THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

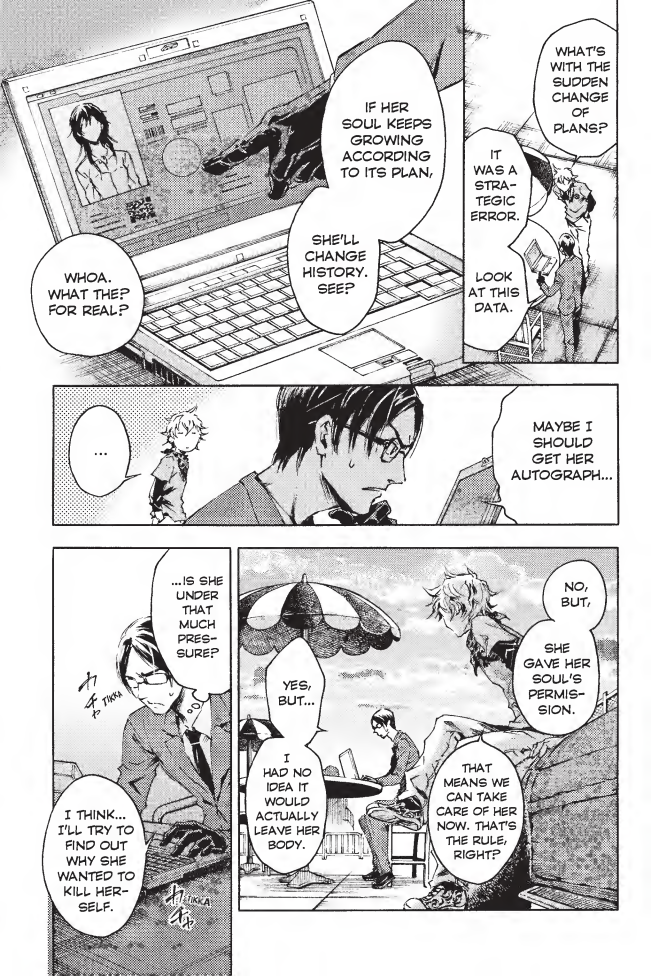
Chapter 4 ✚ Flowchart

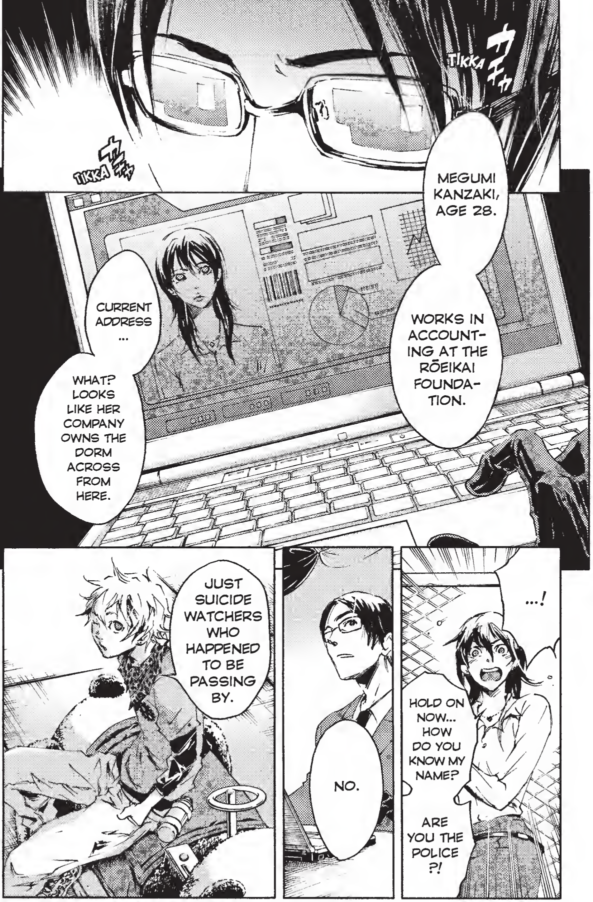

WHY'S HER SOUL...?! DID SHE... DID SHE REALLY WANT TO DIE?!
W... WAIT A MINUTE!

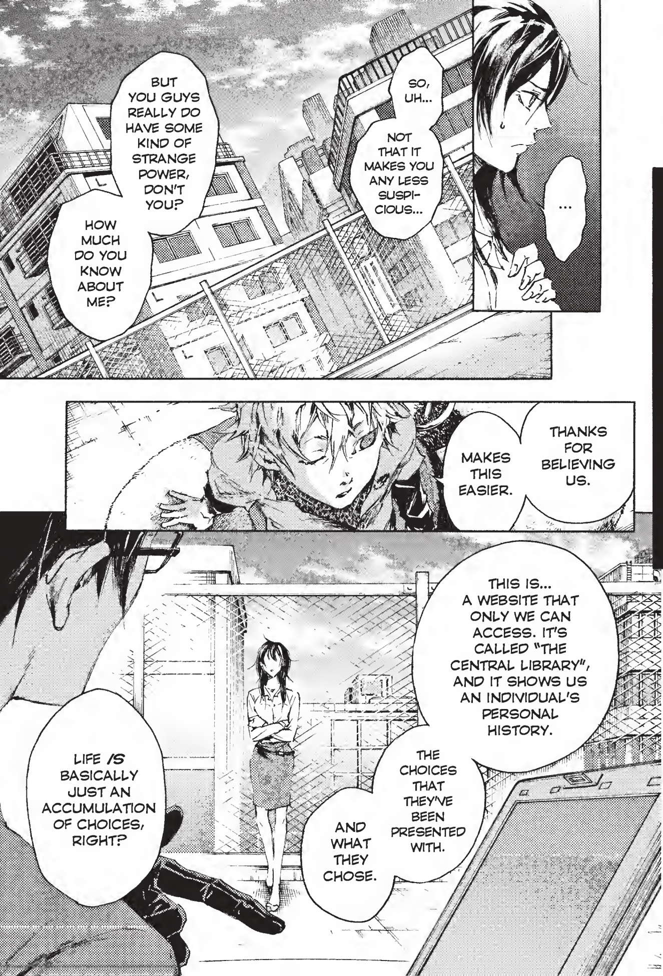

ドッ
WHAM

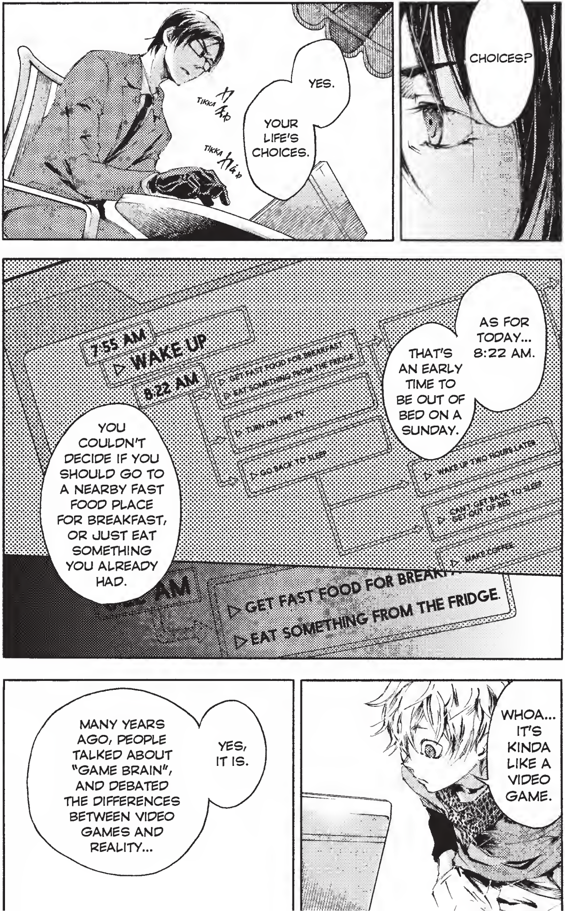

FNNN
HEY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SAKURAI?
WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO OBSTRUCT YOUR OWN BUSINESS?
FOR THE PLANS OF SUCH A LARGE SOUL TO FALL APART LIKE THAT...
I WAS SO SURE IT WAS JUST A PASSING IMPULSE...
huff
huff
GA-SHAK
...?
WHAT... JUST HAP-PENED?
...YOUR SOUL STARTED TO COME OUT OF YOUR BODY, AND YOU BEGAN TO DIE.
WHAT?
SERI-OUS-LY?!

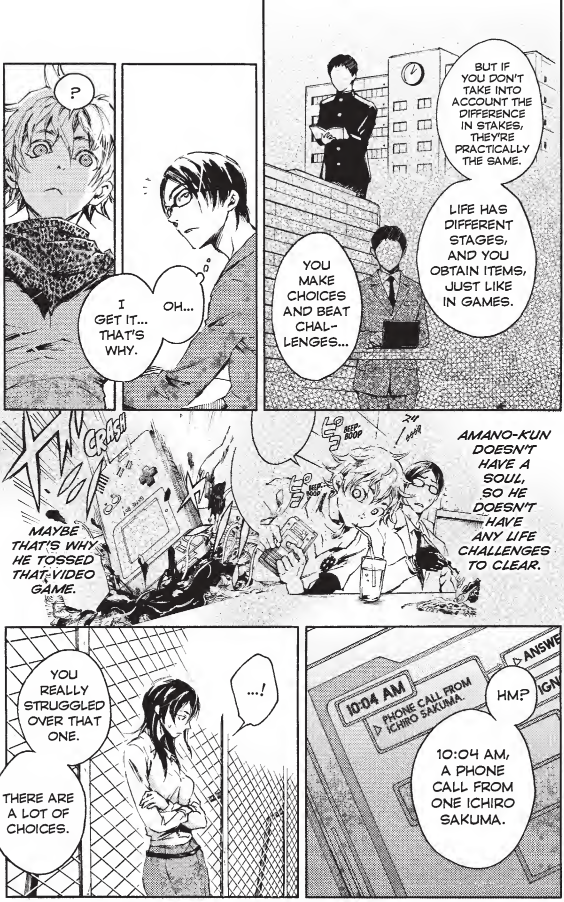

WHY?!
WHY DID YOU GIVE YOUR SOUL'S PERMISSION?! YOU COULD LIVE ANOTHER 41 YEARS!
THERE'S NO *NEED* FOR YOU TO DIE!
YOU SHOULDN'T WASTE LIFE LIKE THAT!
...?
AND NOW I'M GETTING A CHEAP PEP TALK...
YOU'RE THE ONES WHO SAID YOU WERE GOING TO KILL ME.
LIVE!
HUH?
NO, DIE.
GAHH
MAKE UP YOUR MINDS...!

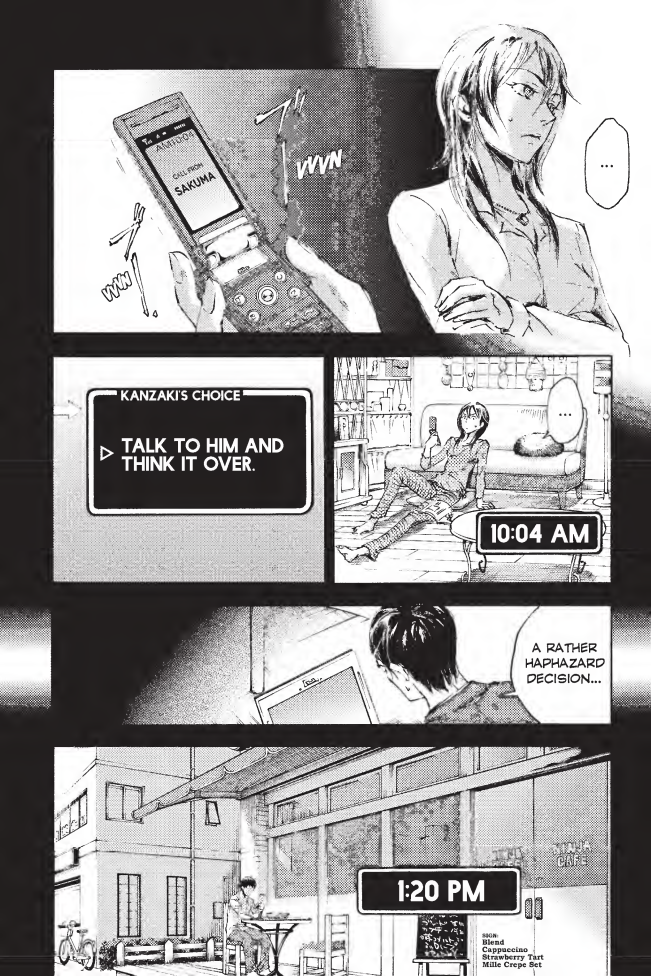

WHAT'S WITH THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF PLANS?
IT WAS A STRATEGIC ERROR.
LOOK AT THIS DATA.
IF HER SOUL KEEPS GROWING ACCORDING TO ITS PLAN,
SHE'LL CHANGE HISTORY. SEE?
WHOA. WHAT THE? FOR REAL?
MAYBE I SHOULD GET HER AUTOGRAPH...
...
NO, BUT,
SHE GAVE HER SOUL'S PERMISSION.
YES, BUT...
THAT MEANS WE CAN TAKE CARE OF HER NOW. THAT'S THE RULE, RIGHT?
I HAD NO IDEA IT WOULD ACTUALLY LEAVE HER BODY.
...IS SHE UNDER THAT MUCH PRESSURE?
カチャ TIKKA
I THINK... I'LL TRY TO FIND OUT WHY SHE WANTED TO KILL HERSELF.
カチャ TIKKA

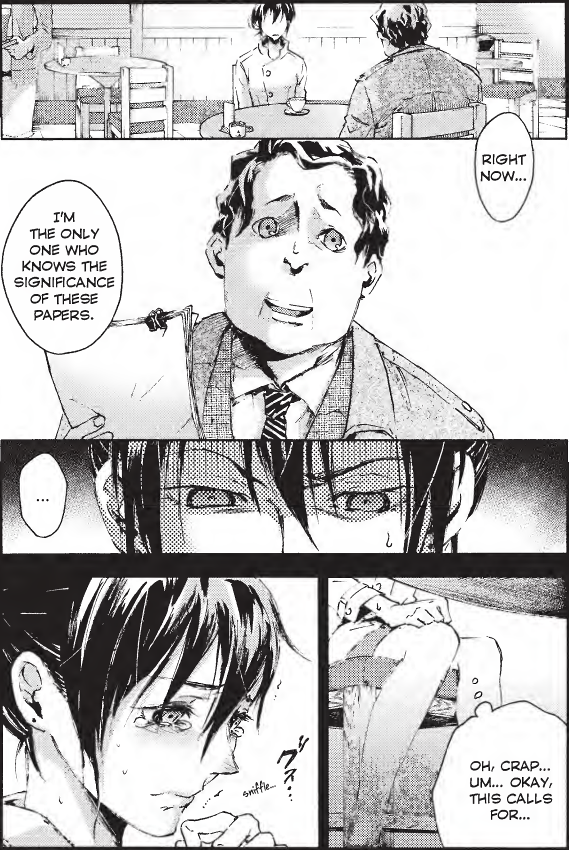

TIKKA
TIKKA
MEGUMI KANZAKI, AGE 28.
WORKS IN ACCOUNTING AT THE RŌEIKAI FOUNDATION.
CURRENT ADDRESS ...
WHAT? LOOKS LIKE HER COMPANY OWNS THE DORM ACROSS FROM HERE.
...!
HOLD ON NOW... HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
ARE YOU THE POLICE ?!
NO.
JUST SUICIDE WATCHERS WHO HAPPENED TO BE PASSING BY.

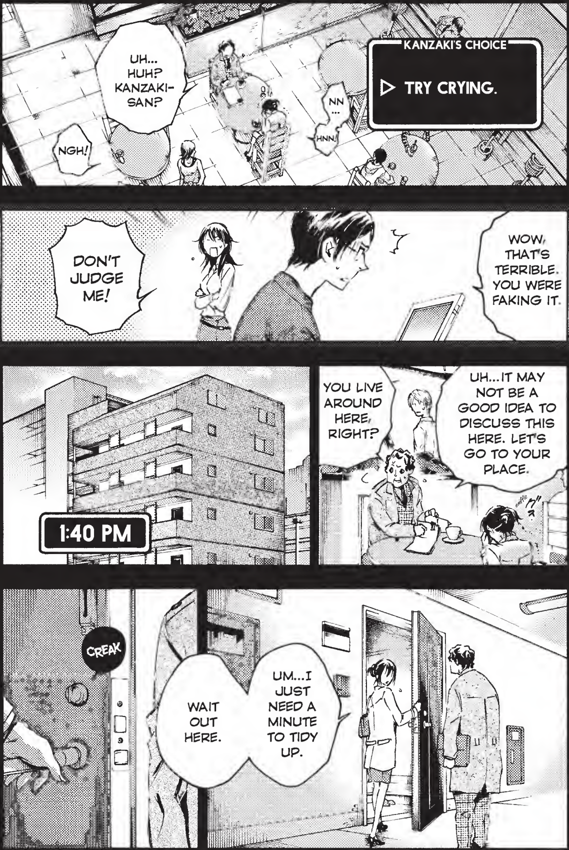

...
SO, UH...
NOT THAT IT MAKES YOU ANY LESS SUSPICIOUS...
BUT YOU GUYS REALLY DO HAVE SOME KIND OF STRANGE POWER, DON'T YOU?
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?
THANKS FOR BELIEVING US.
MAKES THIS EASIER.
THIS IS... A WEBSITE THAT ONLY WE CAN ACCESS. IT'S CALLED "THE CENTRAL LIBRARY", AND IT SHOWS US AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL HISTORY.
THE CHOICES THAT THEY'VE BEEN PRESENTED WITH.
AND WHAT THEY CHOSE.
LIFE *IS* BASICALLY JUST AN ACCUMULATION OF CHOICES, RIGHT?

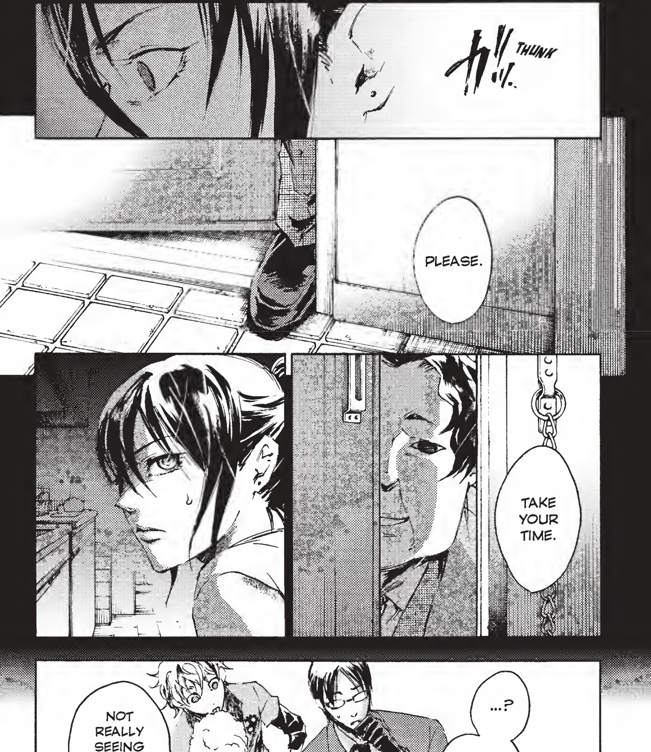

CHOICES?
YES.
YOUR LIFE'S CHOICES.
TIKKA
TIKKA
▷ 7:55 AM
▷ WAKE UP
8:22 AM
▷ GET FAST FOOD FOR BREAKFAST
▷ EAT SOMETHING FROM THE FRIDGE
▷ TURN ON THE TV
▷ GO BACK TO SLEEP
▷ WAKE UP TWO HOURS LATER
▷ CAN'T GET BACK TO SLEEP GET OUT OF BED
▷ MAKE COFFEE
AS FOR TODAY... 8:22 AM.
THAT'S AN EARLY TIME TO BE OUT OF BED ON A SUNDAY.
YOU COULDN'T DECIDE IF YOU SHOULD GO TO A NEARBY FAST FOOD PLACE FOR BREAKFAST, OR JUST EAT SOMETHING YOU ALREADY HAD.
AM
▷ GET FAST FOOD FOR BREAK
▷ EAT SOMETHING FROM THE FRIDGE.
WHOA... IT'S KINDA LIKE A VIDEO GAME.
YES, IT IS.
MANY YEARS AGO, PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT "GAME BRAIN", AND DEBATED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VIDEO GAMES AND REALITY...

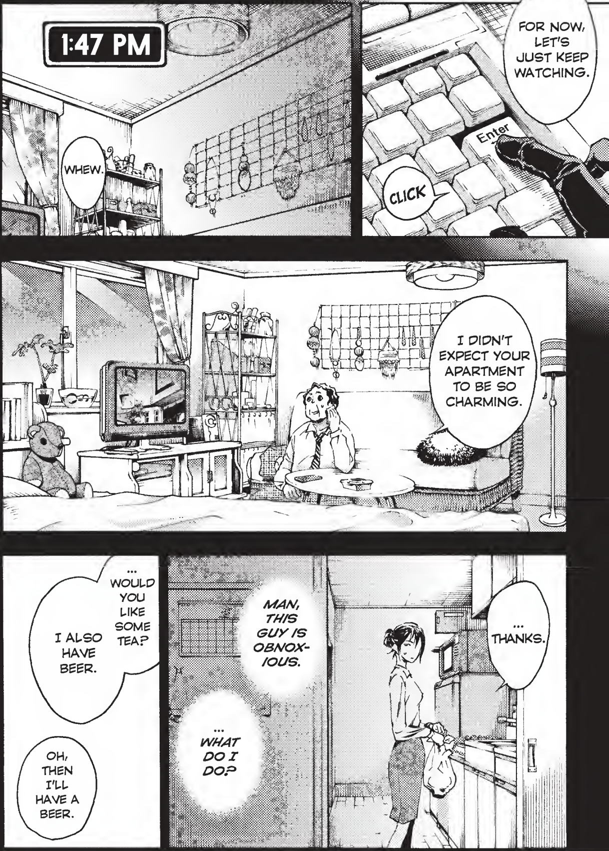

BUT IF YOU DON'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERENCE IN STAKES, THEY'RE PRACTICALLY THE SAME.
LIFE HAS DIFFERENT STAGES, AND YOU OBTAIN ITEMS, JUST LIKE IN GAMES.
YOU MAKE CHOICES AND BEAT CHALLENGES...
OH...
I GET IT... THAT'S WHY.
?
AMANO-KUN DOESN'T HAVE A SOUL, SO HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY LIFE CHALLENGES TO CLEAR.
SSSIP
BEEP-BOOP
BEEP-BOOP
CRASH
MAYBE THAT'S WHY HE TOSSED THAT VIDEO GAME.
10:04 AM
PHONE CALL FROM ICHIRO SAKUMA.
ANSWE
IGN
HM?
10:04 AM, A PHONE CALL FROM ONE ICHIRO SAKUMA.
...!
YOU REALLY STRUGGLED OVER THAT ONE.
THERE ARE A LOT OF CHOICES.

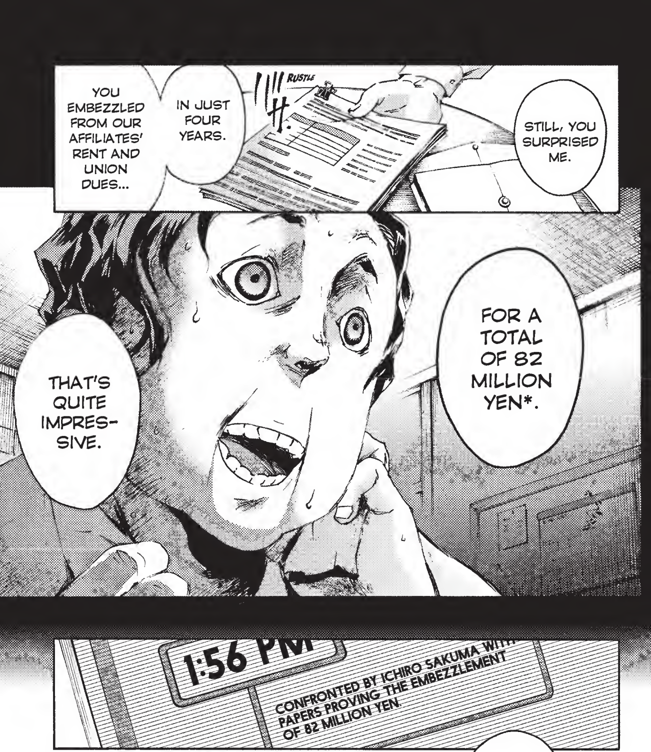

...
AM10:04
CALL FROM
SAKUMA
VVVN
VVVN
...
KANZAKI'S CHOICE
▷ TALK TO HIM AND THINK IT OVER.
10:04 AM
A RATHER HAPHAZARD DECISION...
NINJA CAFE
1:20 PM
SIGN:
Blend
Cappuccino
Strawberry Tart
Mille Crepe Set


RIGHT NOW...
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE PAPERS.
...
OH, CRAP... UM... OKAY, THIS CALLS FOR...
グス・・
sniffle...
...

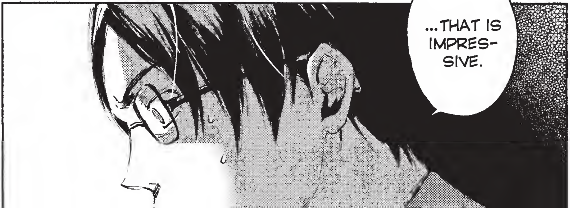

KANZAKI'S CHOICE
▷ TRY CRYING.
NN ...
HNN.
UH... HUH? KANZAKI-SAN?
NGH!
WOW, THAT'S TERRIBLE. YOU WERE FAKING IT.
DON'T JUDGE ME!
UH...IT MAY NOT BE A GOOD IDEA TO DISCUSS THIS HERE. LET'S GO TO YOUR PLACE.
YOU LIVE AROUND HERE, RIGHT?
sniffle
1:40 PM
UM...I JUST NEED A MINUTE TO TIDY UP.
WAIT OUT HERE.
CREAK

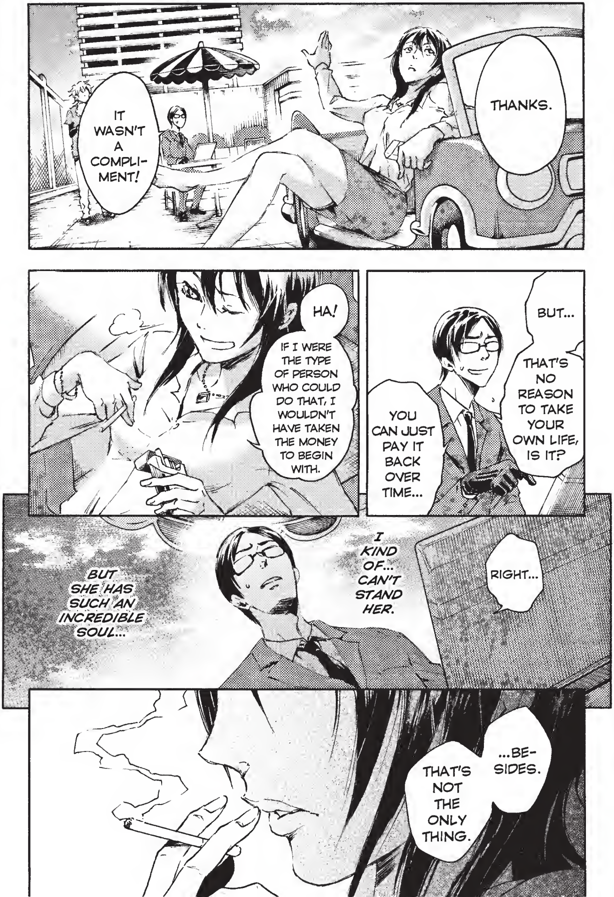

カ!!
THUNK
PLEASE.
TAKE YOUR TIME.
...?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
NOT REALLY SEEING ANYTHING IMPORTANT, ARE WE?

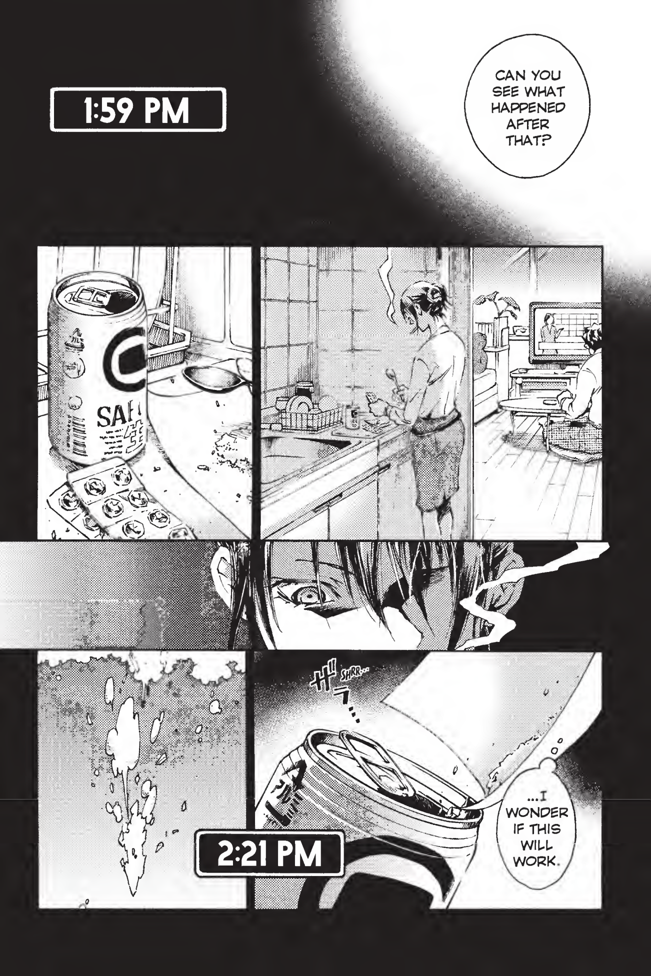

FOR NOW, LET'S JUST KEEP WATCHING.
Enter
CLICK
1:47 PM
WHEW.
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOUR APARTMENT TO BE SO CHARMING.
... THANKS.
MAN, THIS GUY IS OBNOX-IOUS.
... WHAT DO I DO?
... WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?
I ALSO HAVE BEER.
OH, THEN I'LL HAVE A BEER.

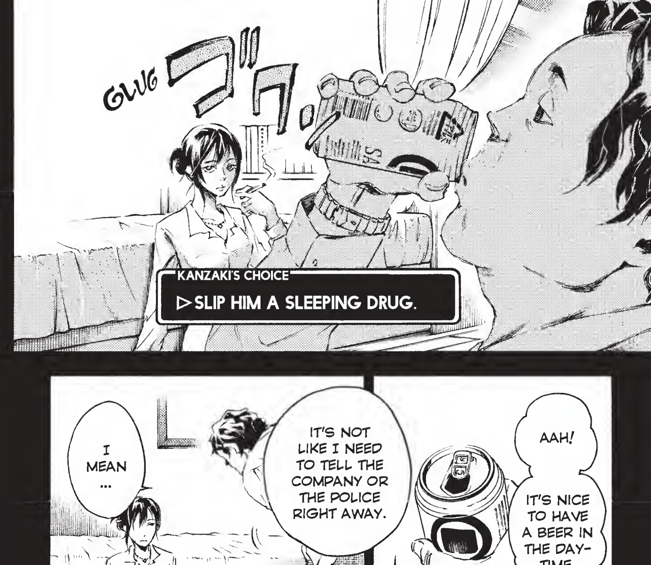

STILL, YOU SURPRISED ME.
RUSTLE
IN JUST FOUR YEARS.
YOU EMBEZZLED FROM OUR AFFILIATES' RENT AND UNION DUES...
FOR A TOTAL OF 82 MILLION YEN*.
THAT'S QUITE IMPRESSIVE.
1:56 PM
CONFRONTED BY ICHIRO SAKUMA WITH PAPERS PROVING THE EMBEZZLEMENT OF 82 MILLION YEN.

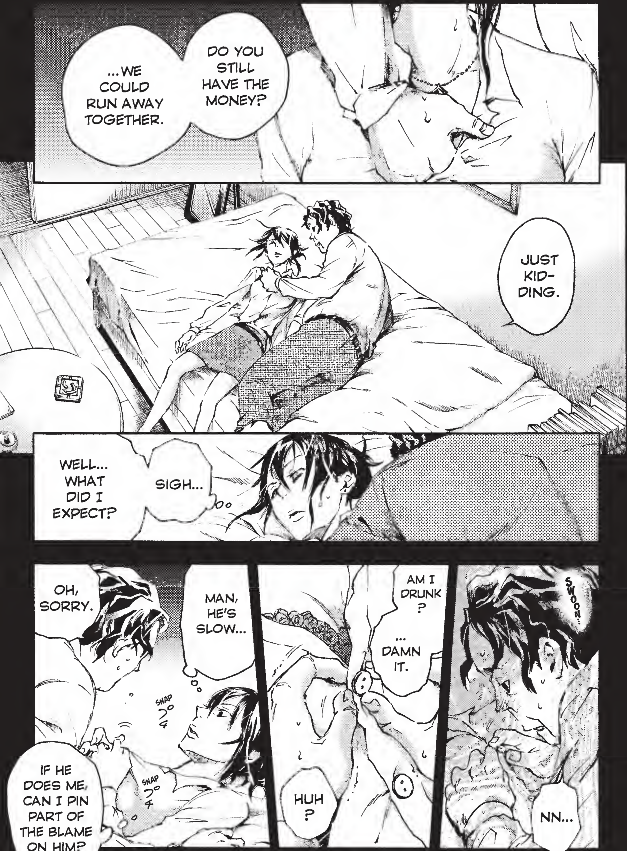
*About $820,000

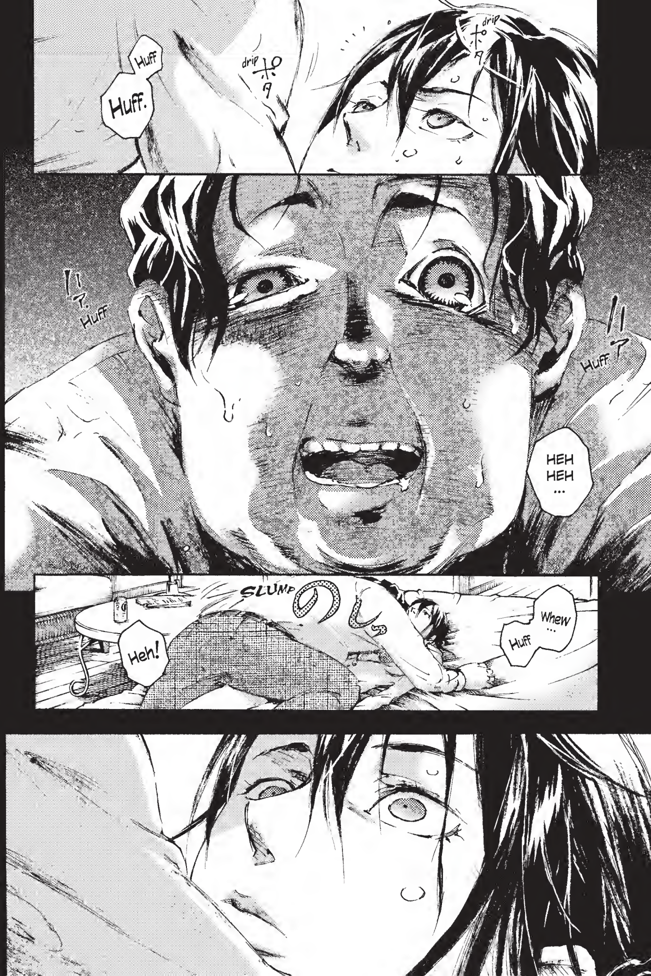

...THAT IS IMPRESSIVE.

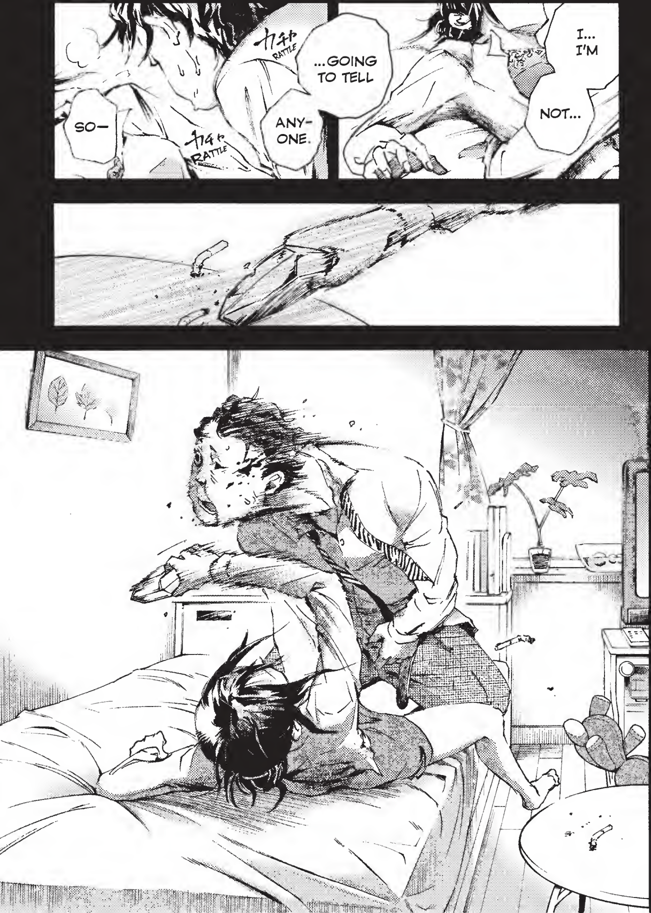

THANKS.
IT WASN'T A COMPLIMENT!
BUT...
THAT'S NO REASON TO TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE, IS IT?
YOU CAN JUST PAY IT BACK OVER TIME...
HA!
IF I WERE THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO COULD DO THAT, I WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THE MONEY TO BEGIN WITH.
RIGHT...
I KIND OF... CAN'T STAND HER.
BUT SHE HAS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE SOUL...
...BESIDES.
THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING.

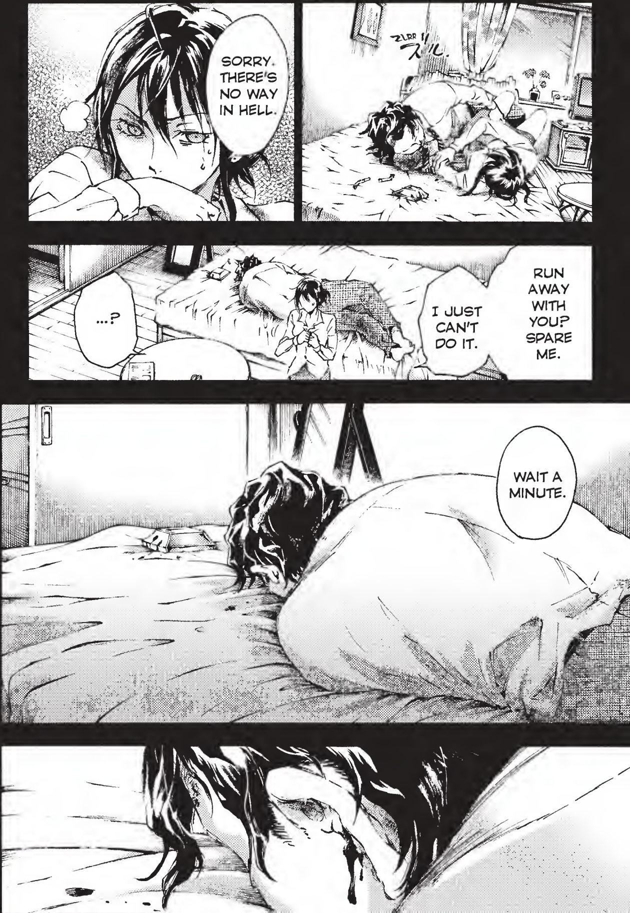

CAN YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?
1:59 PM
ザー SHRR...
...I WONDER IF THIS WILL WORK.
2:21 PM

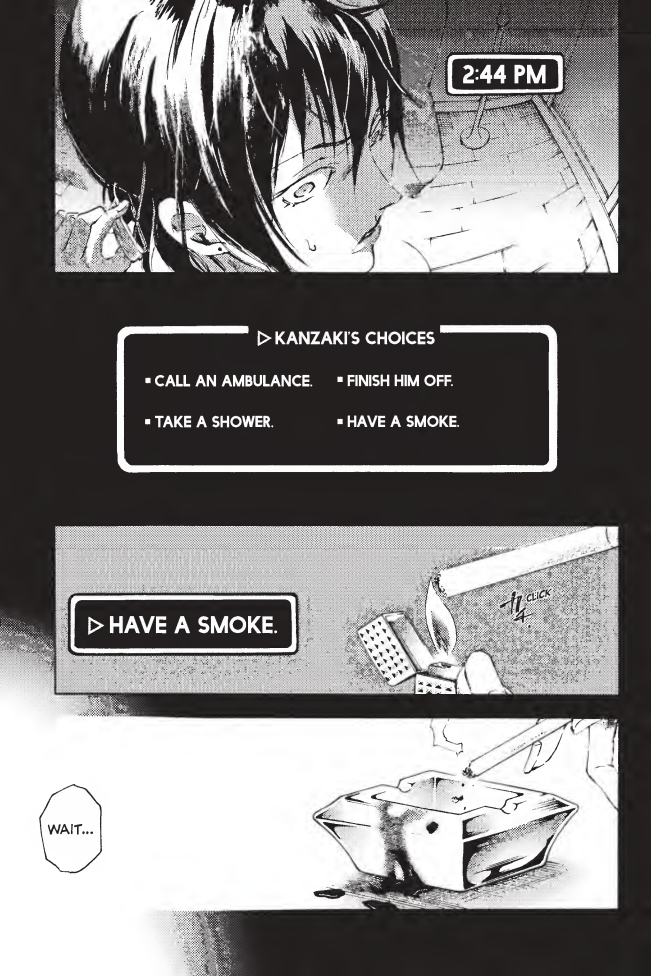

GLUG
ゴク
KANZAKI'S CHOICE
▷SLIP HIM A SLEEPING DRUG.
AAH!
IT'S NICE TO HAVE A BEER IN THE DAY-TIME.
CLANG
カン
IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED TO TELL THE COMPANY OR THE POLICE RIGHT AWAY.
I MEAN ...
YOU'RE... PRETTY MUCH MY TYPE, KANZAKI-SAN.
CREAK
ギシ
I WAS JUST SHOCKED, IS ALL...

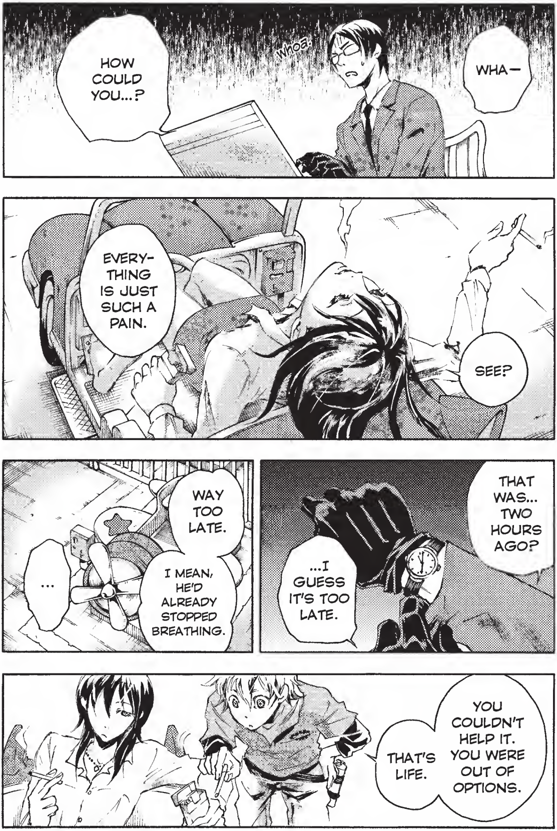

DO YOU STILL HAVE THE MONEY?
...WE COULD RUN AWAY TOGETHER.
JUST KIDDING.
SIGH...
WELL... WHAT DID I EXPECT?
SWOON...
NN...
AM I DRUNK?
...DAMN IT.
HUH?
MAN, HE'S SLOW...
OH, SORRY.
SNAP
SNAP
IF HE DOES ME, CAN I PIN PART OF THE BLAME ON HIM?

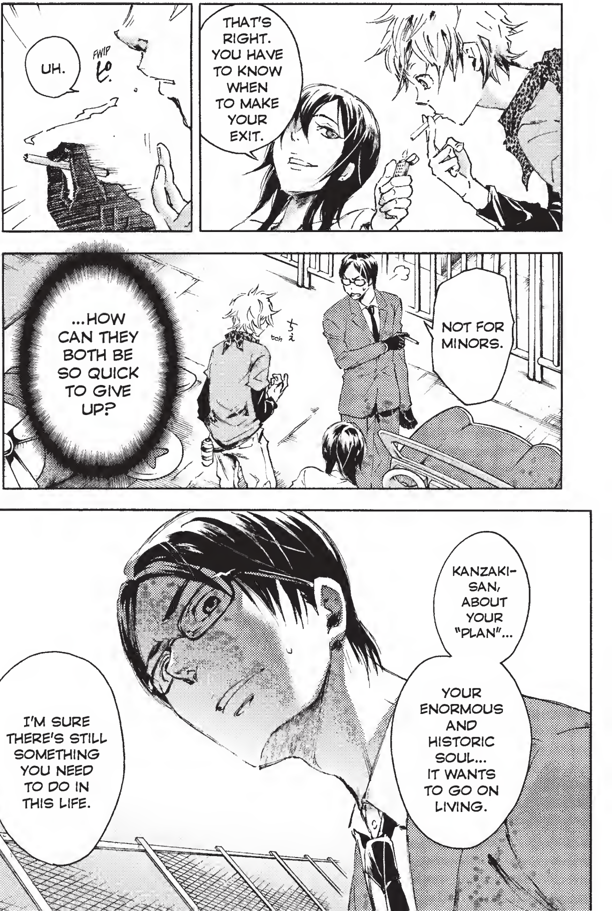

drip
drip
Huff
Huff.
ハァ Huff
ハァ. Huff
HEH HEH ...
Whew ...
Huff
SLUMP
Heh!

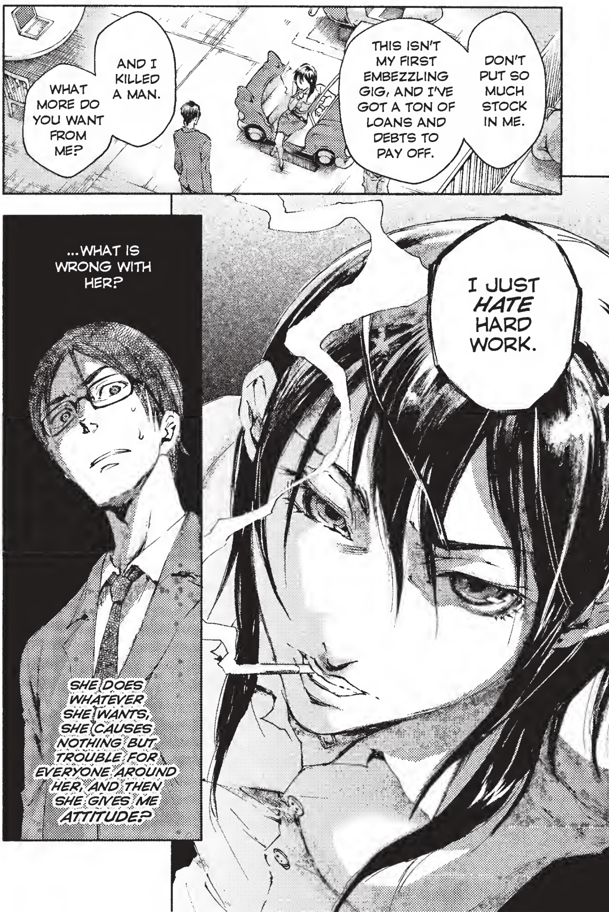

I... I'M NOT...
...GOING TO TELL
ANY-ONE.
カチャ RATTLE
カチャ RATTLE
SO—

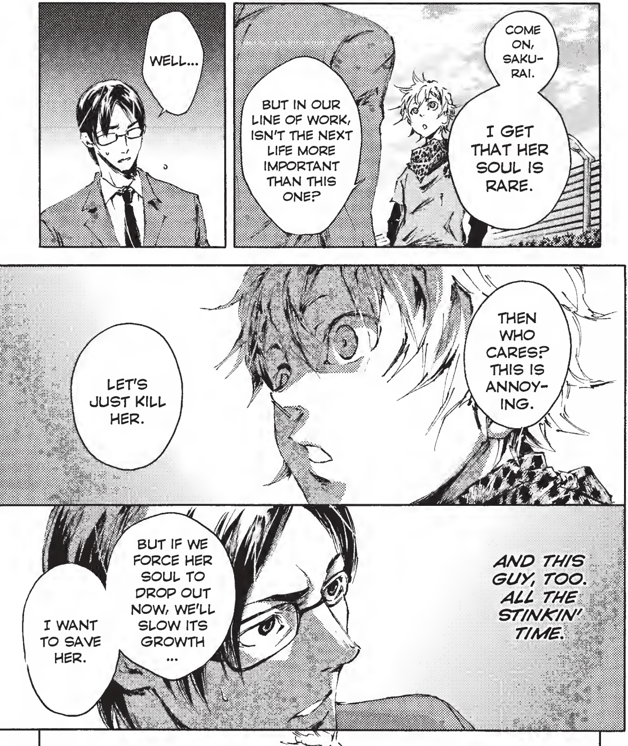

ZLRR
ズル.
SORRY. THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL.
RUN AWAY WITH YOU? SPARE ME.
I JUST CAN'T DO IT.
...?
WAIT A MINUTE.

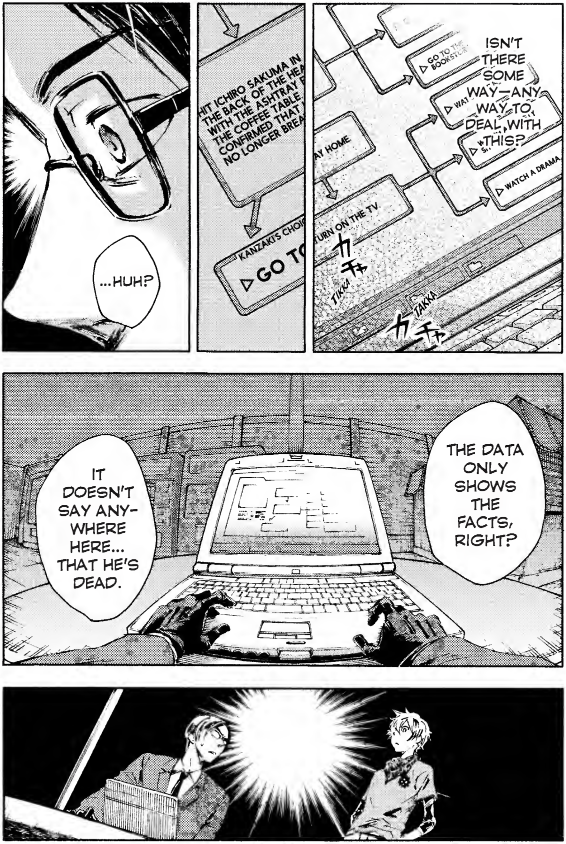

2:44 PM
▷ KANZAKI'S CHOICES
▪ CALL AN AMBULANCE.
▪ FINISH HIM OFF.
▪ TAKE A SHOWER.
▪ HAVE A SMOKE.
▷ HAVE A SMOKE.
CLICK
WAIT...

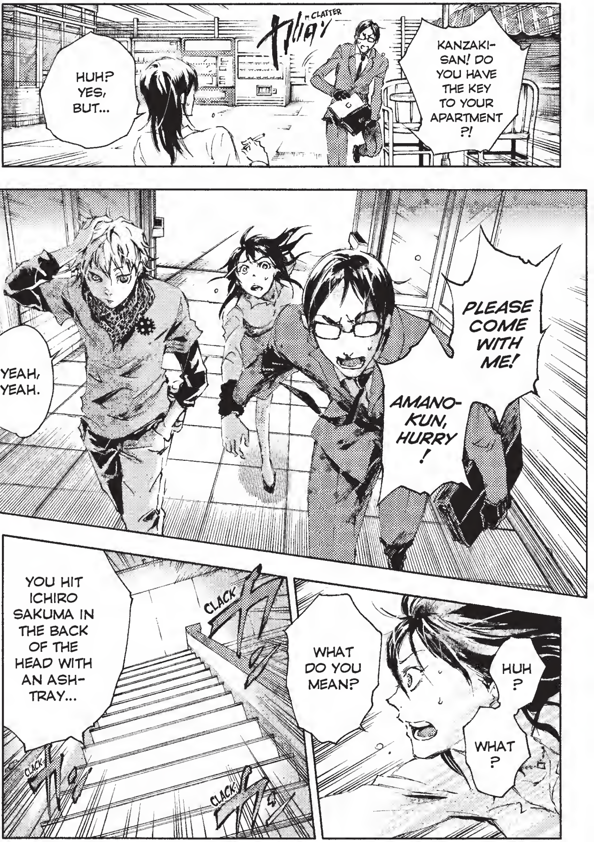

WHA—
Whoa.
HOW COULD YOU...?
SEE?
EVERYTHING IS JUST SUCH A PAIN.
THAT WAS... TWO HOURS AGO?
...I GUESS IT'S TOO LATE.
WAY TOO LATE.
I MEAN, HE'D ALREADY STOPPED BREATHING.
...
YOU COULDN'T HELP IT. YOU WERE OUT OF OPTIONS.
THAT'S LIFE.

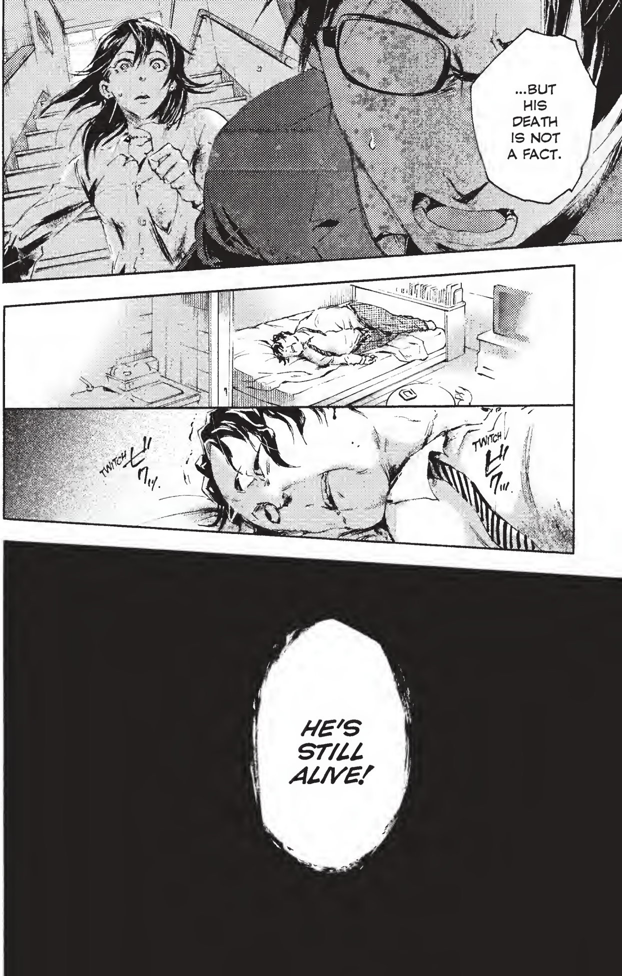

THAT'S RIGHT. YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHEN TO MAKE YOUR EXIT.
UH.
FWIP
NOT FOR MINORS.
tch
...HOW CAN THEY BOTH BE SO QUICK TO GIVE UP?
KANZAKI-SAN, ABOUT YOUR "PLAN"...
YOUR ENORMOUS AND HISTORIC SOUL... IT WANTS TO GO ON LIVING.
I'M SURE THERE'S STILL SOMETHING YOU NEED TO DO IN THIS LIFE.


DON'T PUT SO MUCH STOCK IN ME.
THIS ISN'T MY FIRST EMBEZZLING GIG, AND I'VE GOT A TON OF LOANS AND DEBTS TO PAY OFF.
AND I KILLED A MAN.
WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
I JUST *HATE* HARD WORK.
...WHAT IS WRONG WITH HER?
SHE DOES WHATEVER SHE WANTS, SHE CAUSES NOTHING BUT TROUBLE FOR EVERYONE AROUND HER, AND THEN SHE GIVES ME ATTITUDE?

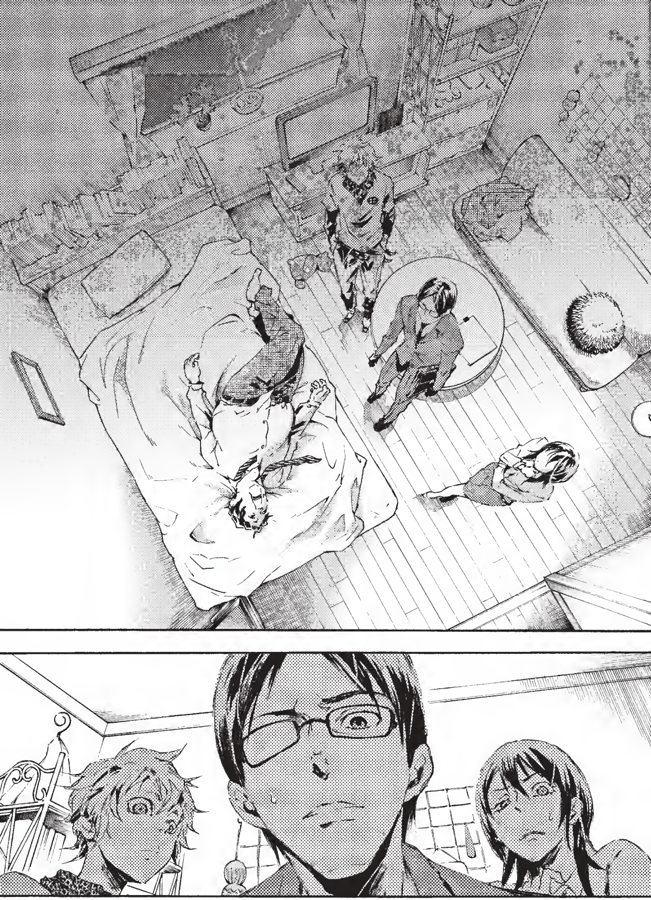

COME ON, SAKURAI.
I GET THAT HER SOUL IS RARE.
BUT IN OUR LINE OF WORK, ISN'T THE NEXT LIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS ONE?
WELL...
THEN WHO CARES? THIS IS ANNOYING.
LET'S JUST KILL HER.
AND THIS GUY, TOO. ALL THE STINKIN' TIME.
BUT IF WE FORCE HER SOUL TO DROP OUT NOW, WE'LL SLOW ITS GROWTH...
I WANT TO SAVE HER.

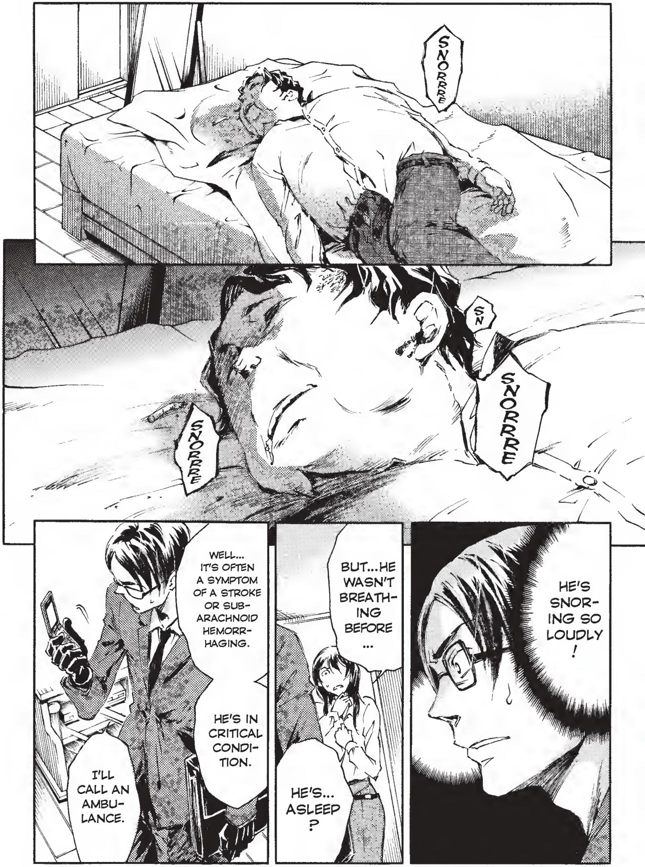

ISN'T THERE SOME WAY—ANY WAY TO DEAL WITH THIS?
GO TO THE BOOKSTOR
WATCH A DRAMA
TURN ON THE TV
AY HOME
カチャ
TAKKA
カチャ
TAKKA
HIT ICHIRO SAKUMA IN THE BACK OF THE HEA WITH THE ASHTRAY F THE COFFEE TABLE CONFIRMED THAT NO LONGER BREA
KANZAKI'S CHOIC
GO TO
...HUH?
THE DATA ONLY SHOWS THE FACTS, RIGHT?
IT DOESN'T SAY ANYWHERE HERE... THAT HE'S DEAD.

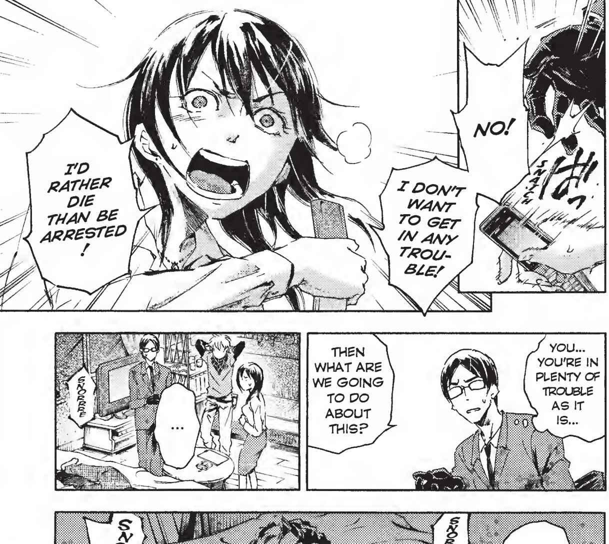

KANZAKI-SAN! DO YOU HAVE THE KEY TO YOUR APARTMENT?!
CLATTER
HUH? YES, BUT...
PLEASE COME WITH ME!
AMANO-KUN, HURRY!
YEAH, YEAH.
HUH?
WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
CLACK
YOU HIT ICHIRO SAKUMA IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD WITH AN ASH-TRAY...
CLACK
CLACK

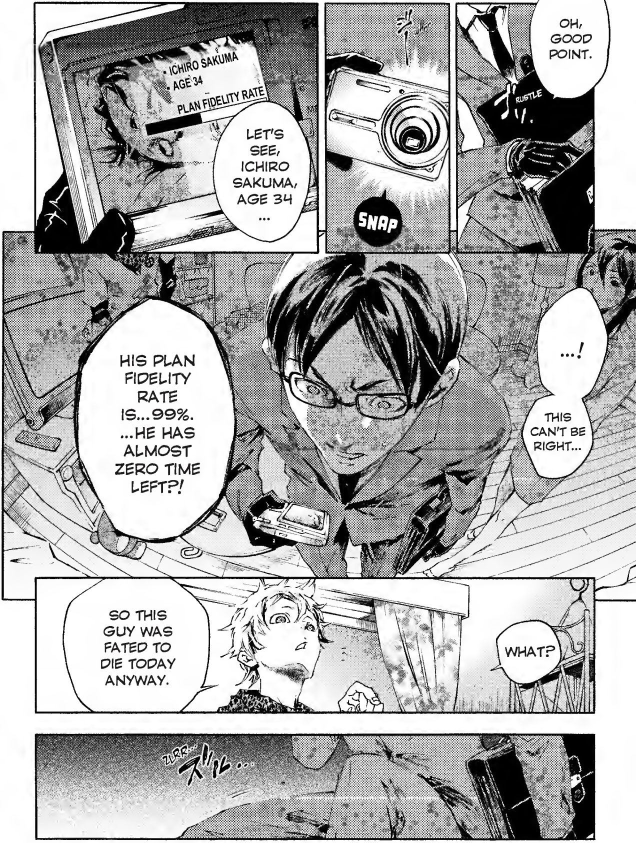

...BUT HIS DEATH IS NOT A FACT.
TWITCH
TWITCH
HE'S STILL ALIVE!

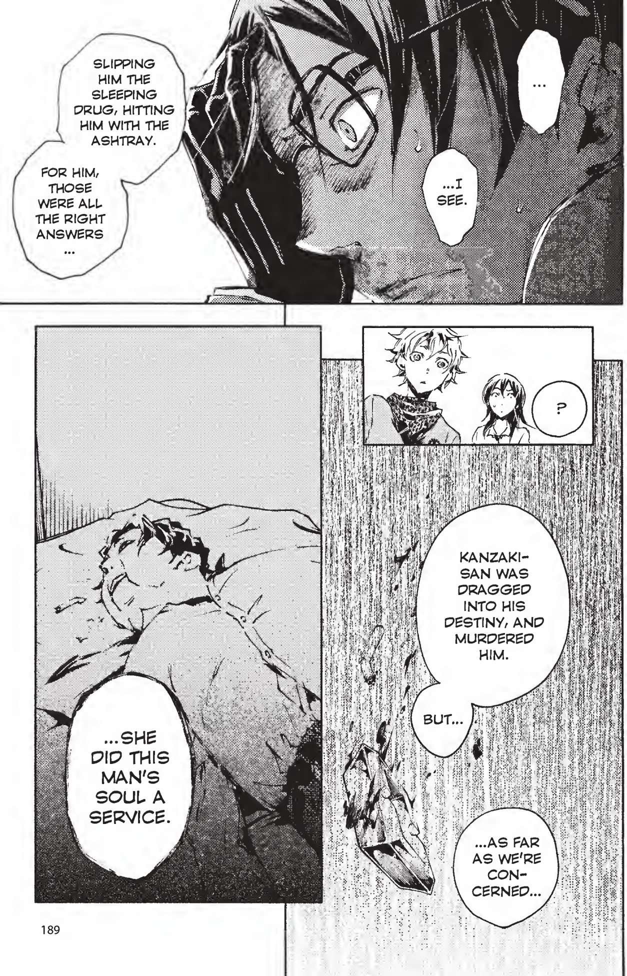
Chapter 5 ✚ Cheat Code

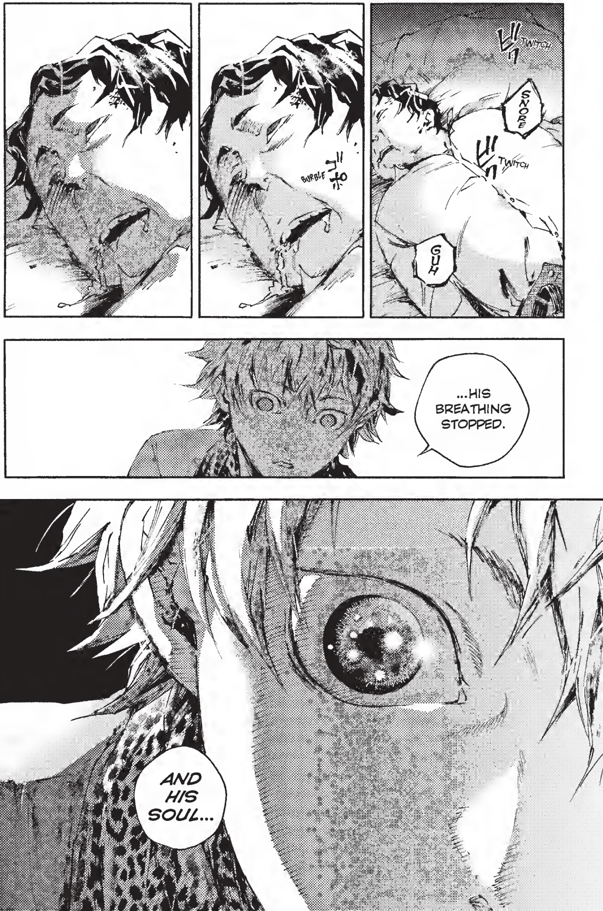


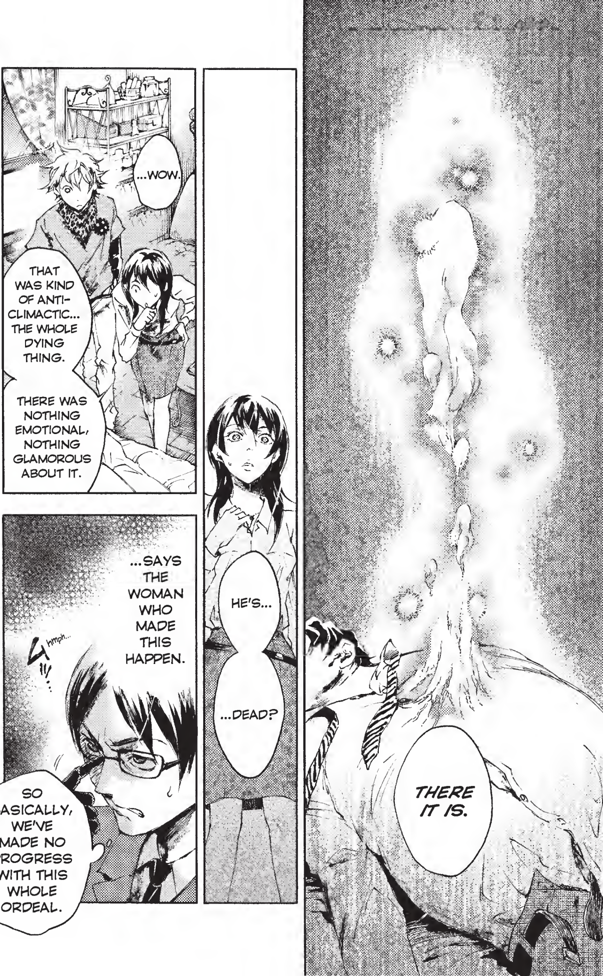

SNORRRE
SN
SNORRRE
SNORRRE
HE'S SNORING SO LOUDLY!
BUT...HE WASN'T BREATHING BEFORE...
HE'S... ASLEEP?
WELL... IT'S OFTEN A SYMPTOM OF A STROKE OR SUB-ARACHNOID HEMORRHAGING.
HE'S IN CRITICAL CONDITION.
I'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE.

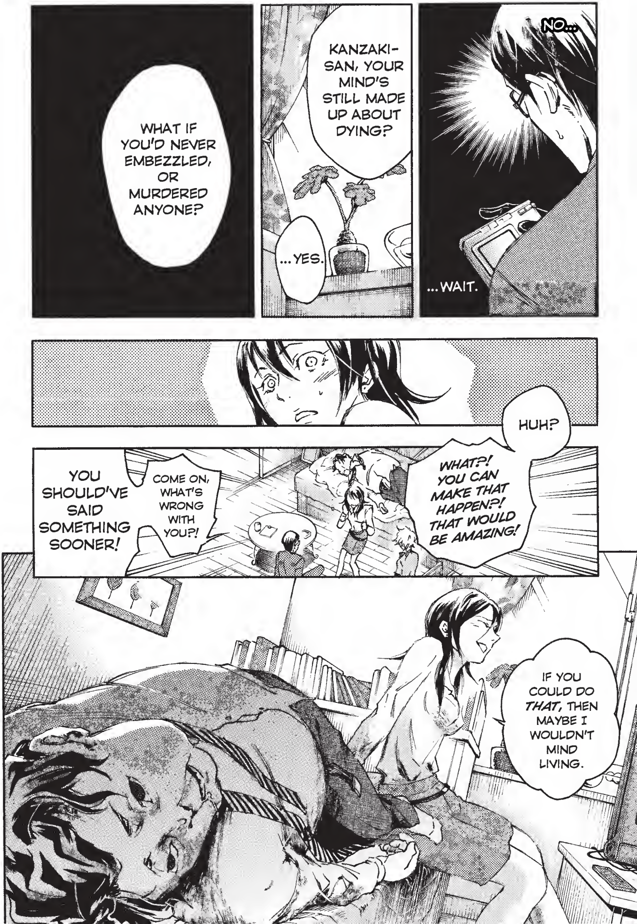

NO!
SNATCH
ぱっ
I DON'T WANT TO GET IN ANY TROUBLE!
I'D RATHER DIE THAN BE ARRESTED!
YOU... YOU'RE IN PLENTY OF TROUBLE AS IT IS...
THEN WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT THIS?
SNORRRE
...
SNORRRE
I DON'T KNOW...
SNORRRE
ANYWAY.
THIS WAS AN "ACCIDENT," RIGHT?
RATTLE
SHOULDN'T YOU CHECK HIS SOUL PLAN?
It could turn into a stain.

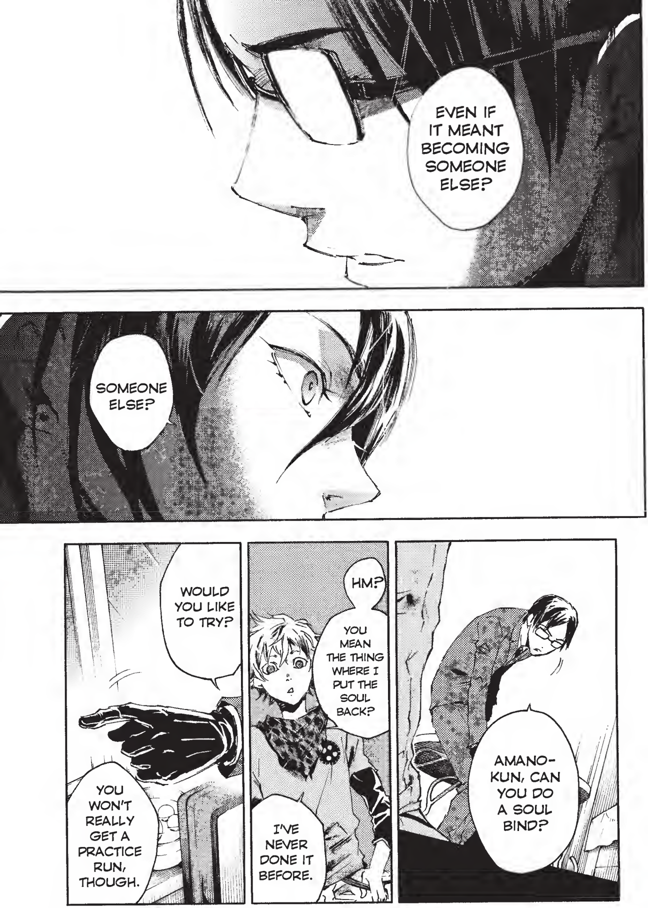

OH, GOOD POINT.
RUSTLE
whir
SNAP
ICHIRO SAKUMA
AGE 34
PLAN FIDELITY RATE
LET'S SEE, ICHIRO SAKUMA, AGE 34 ...
...!
THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT...
HIS PLAN FIDELITY RATE IS...99%. ...HE HAS ALMOST ZERO TIME LEFT?!
WHAT?
SO THIS GUY WAS FATED TO DIE TODAY ANYWAY.
ZURR...
ズル…

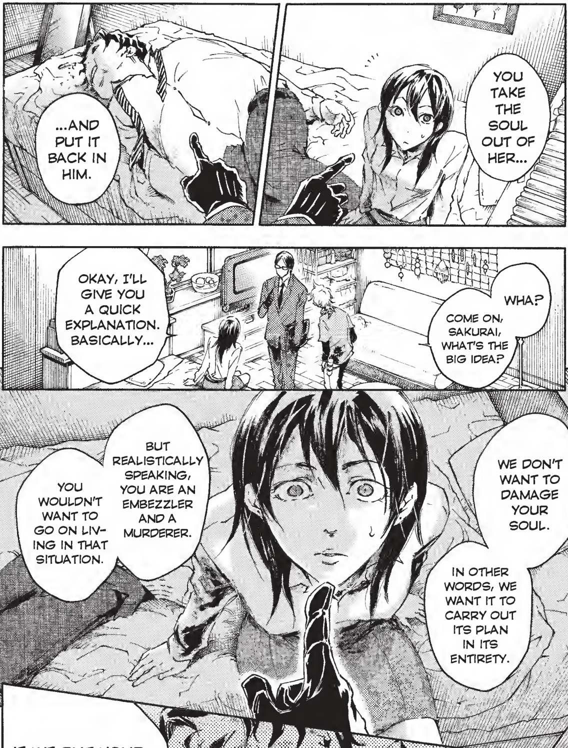

...
...I SEE.
SLIPPING HIM THE SLEEPING DRUG, HITTING HIM WITH THE ASHTRAY.
FOR HIM, THOSE WERE ALL THE RIGHT ANSWERS...
?
KANZAKI-SAN WAS DRAGGED INTO HIS DESTINY, AND MURDERED HIM.
BUT...
...AS FAR AS WE'RE CONCERNED...
...SHE DID THIS MAN'S SOUL A SERVICE.

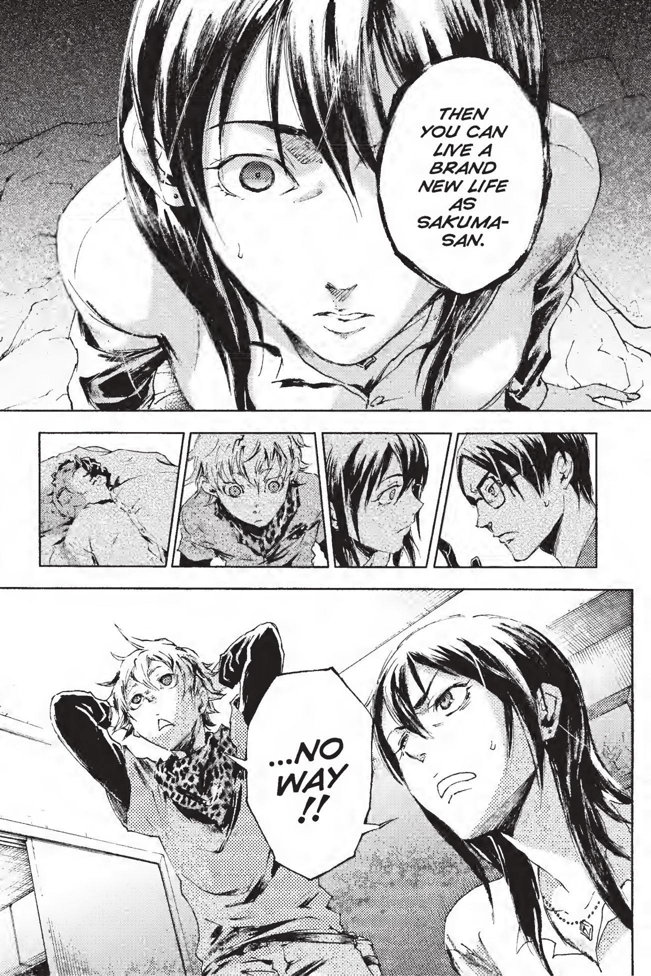

TWITCH
SNORE
TWITCH
GUH
BURBLE
...HIS BREATHING STOPPED.
AND HIS SOUL...

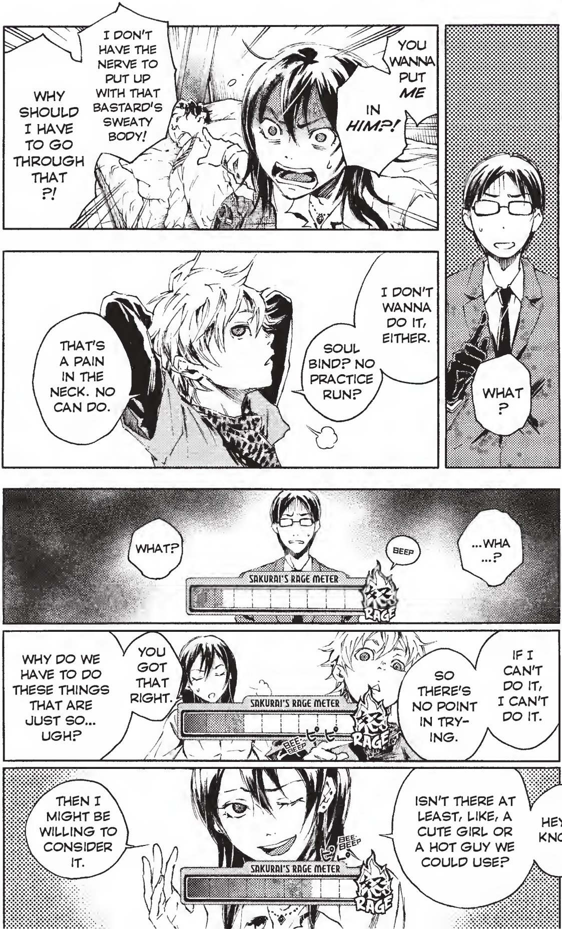

THERE IT IS.
HE'S...
...DEAD?
...WOW.
THAT WAS KIND OF ANTI-CLIMACTIC... THE WHOLE DYING THING.
THERE WAS NOTHING EMOTIONAL, NOTHING GLAMOROUS ABOUT IT.
...SAYS THE WOMAN WHO MADE THIS HAPPEN.
hmph...
SO BASICALLY, WE'VE MADE NO PROGRESS WITH THIS WHOLE ORDEAL.

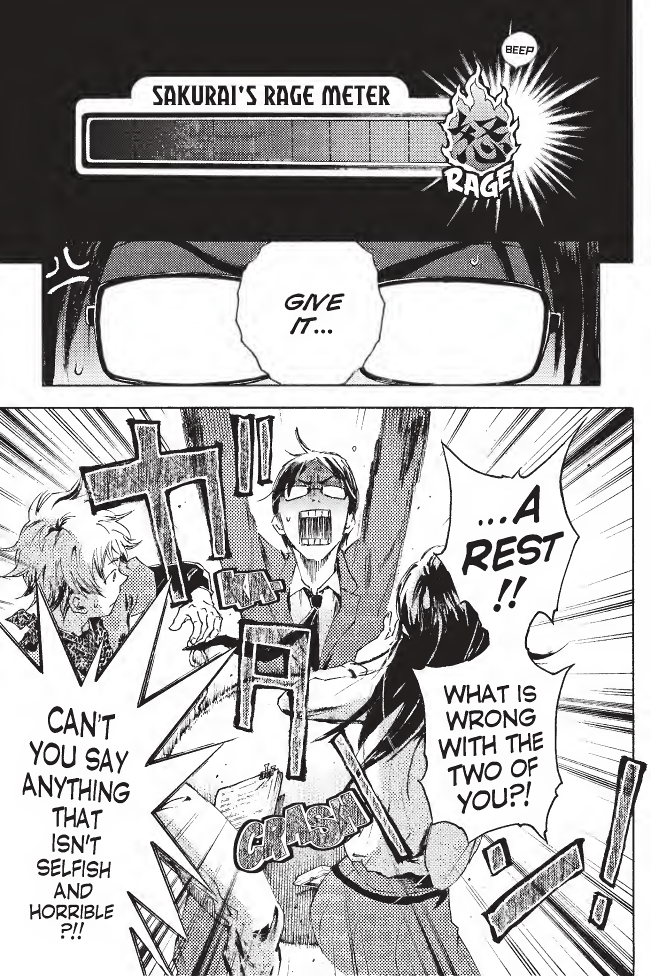

NO...
...WAIT.
KANZAKI-SAN, YOUR MIND'S STILL MADE UP ABOUT DYING?
...YES.
WHAT IF YOU'D NEVER EMBEZZLED, OR MURDERED ANYONE?
HUH?
WHAT?! YOU CAN MAKE THAT HAPPEN?! THAT WOULD BE AMAZING!
COME ON, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
YOU SHOULD'VE SAID SOMETHING SOONER!
IF YOU COULD DO *THAT,* THEN MAYBE I WOULDN'T MIND LIVING.

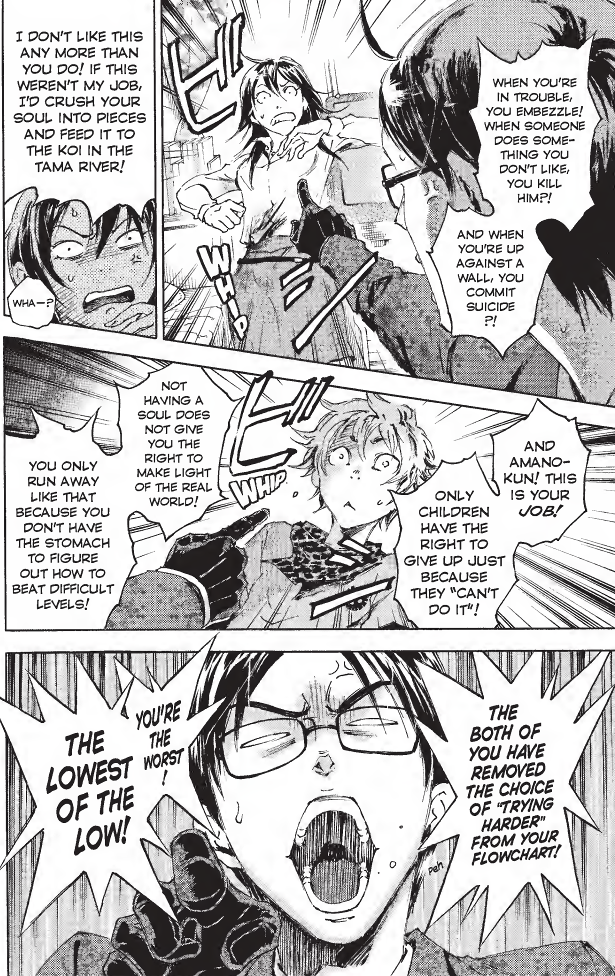

EVEN IF IT MEANT BECOMING SOMEONE ELSE?
SOMEONE ELSE?
AMANO-KUN, CAN YOU DO A SOUL BIND?
HM?
YOU MEAN THE THING WHERE I PUT THE SOUL BACK?
I'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY?
YOU WON'T REALLY GET A PRACTICE RUN, THOUGH.

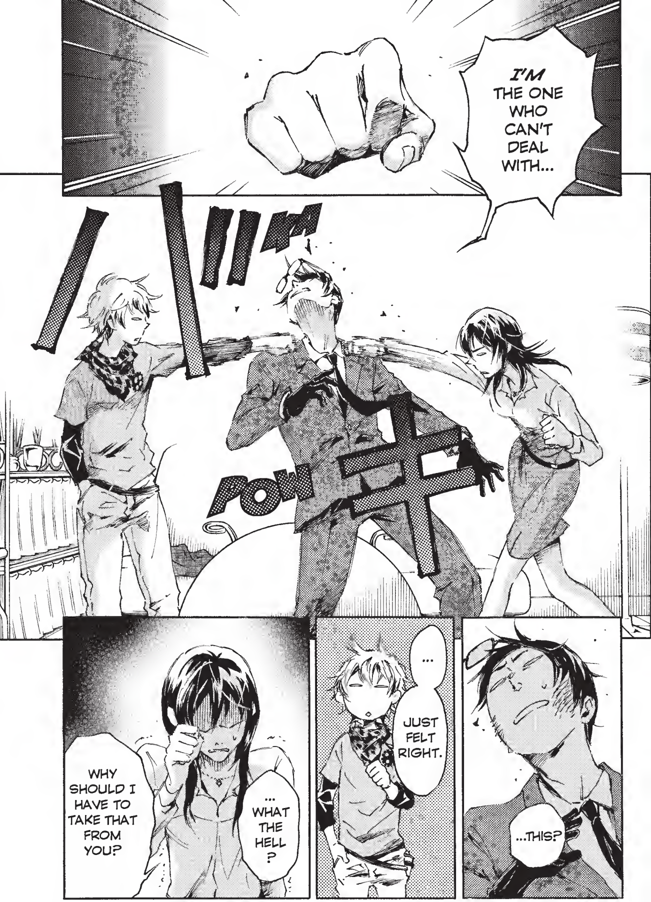

YOU TAKE THE SOUL OUT OF HER...
...AND PUT IT BACK IN HIM.
WHA?
COME ON, SAKURAI, WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?
OKAY, I'LL GIVE YOU A QUICK EXPLANATION. BASICALLY...
WE DON'T WANT TO DAMAGE YOUR SOUL.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE WANT IT TO CARRY OUT ITS PLAN IN ITS ENTIRETY.
BUT REALISTICALLY SPEAKING, YOU ARE AN EMBEZZLER AND A MURDERER.
YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO GO ON LIVING IN THAT SITUATION.
HOWEVER...
IF WE PUT YOUR SOUL INTO *THIS MAN'S* BODY,

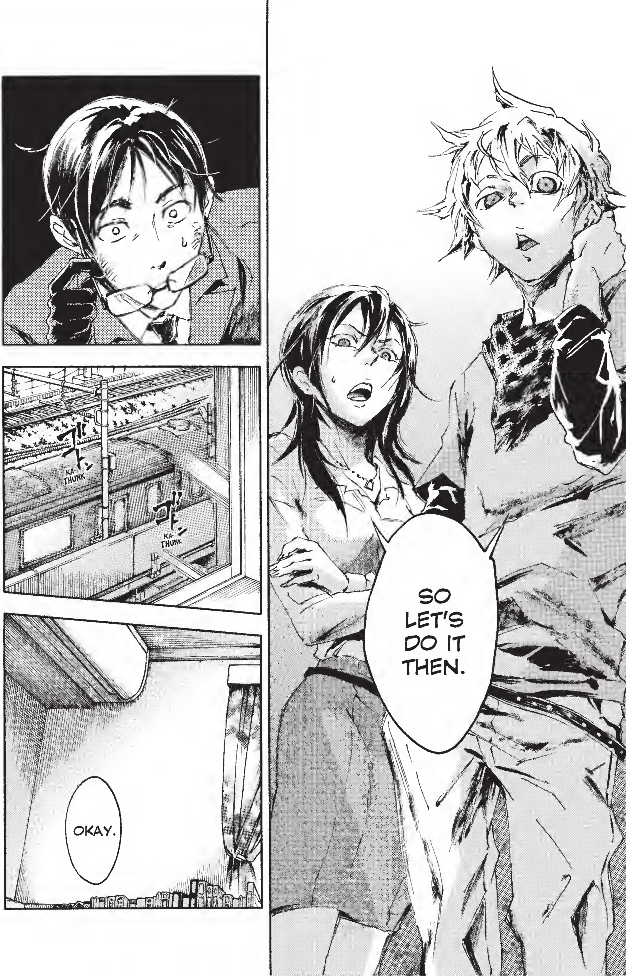

THEN YOU CAN LIVE A BRAND NEW LIFE AS SAKUMA-SAN.
...NO WAY!!

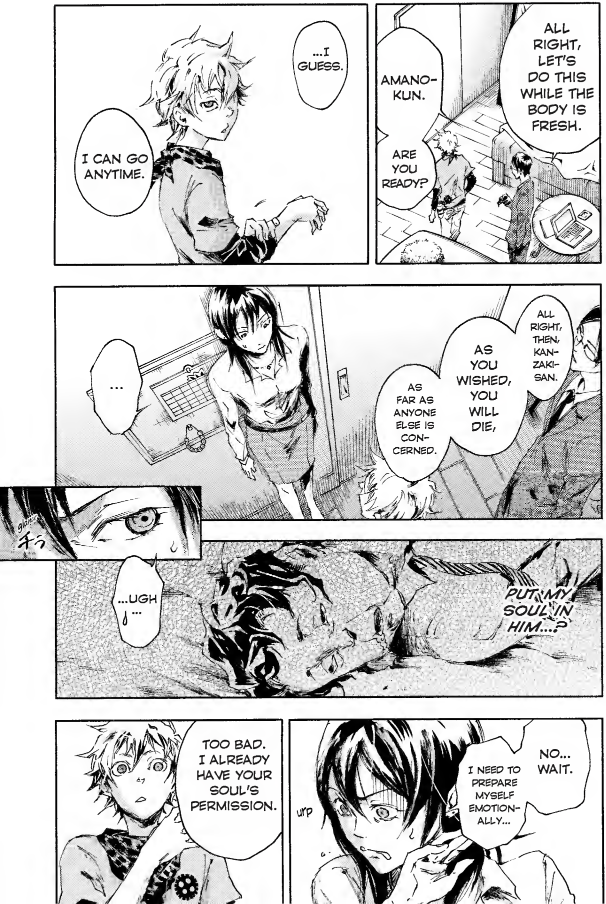

WHAT ?
YOU WANNA PUT ME IN HIM?!
I DON'T HAVE THE NERVE TO PUT UP WITH THAT BASTARD'S SWEATY BODY!
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO GO THROUGH THAT ?!
I DON'T WANNA DO IT, EITHER.
SOUL BIND? NO PRACTICE RUN?
THAT'S A PAIN IN THE NECK. NO CAN DO.
...WHA ...?
BEEP
WHAT?
SAKURAI'S RAGE METER
怒 RAGE
IF I CAN'T DO IT, I CAN'T DO IT.
SO THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT.
WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THESE THINGS THAT ARE JUST SO... UGH?
SAKURAI'S RAGE METER
BEE BEEP ピピ
怒 RAGE
HEY, I KNOW.
ISN'T THERE AT LEAST, LIKE, A CUTE GIRL OR A HOT GUY WE COULD USE?
THEN I MIGHT BE WILLING TO CONSIDER IT.
BEE BEEP ピピ
SAKURAI'S RAGE METER
怒 RAGE

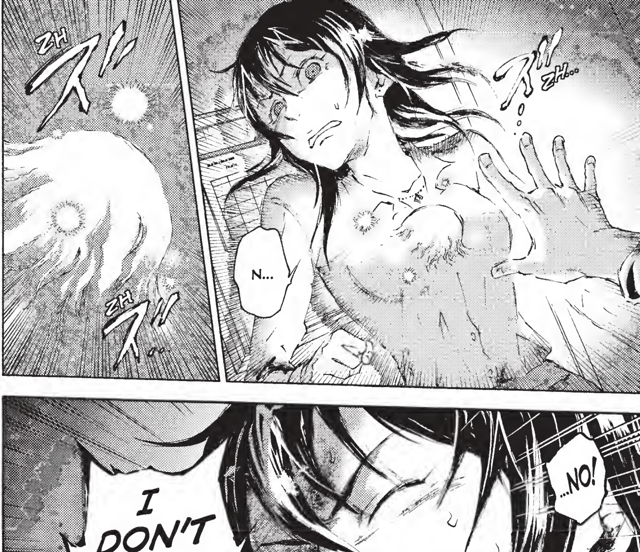

BEEP
SAKURAI'S RAGE METER
怒
RAGE
GIVE IT...
...A REST!!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE TWO OF YOU?!
CAN'T YOU SAY ANYTHING THAT ISN'T SELFISH AND HORRIBLE?!!
KA-
CRASH

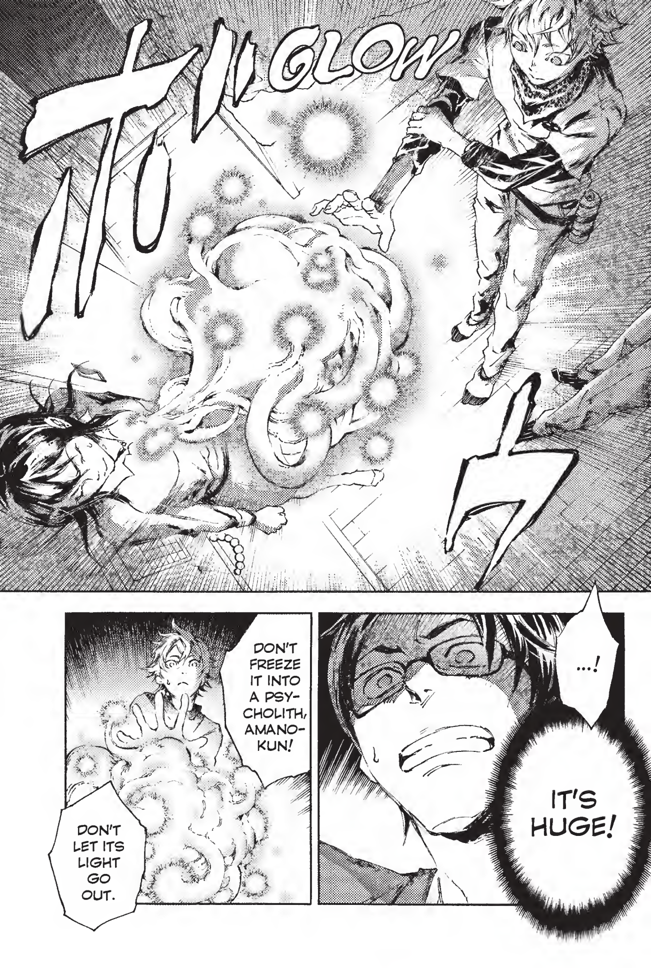

WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, YOU EMBEZZLE! WHEN SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING YOU DON'T LIKE, YOU KILL HIM?!
AND WHEN YOU'RE UP AGAINST A WALL, YOU COMMIT SUICIDE?!
WHIP
ヒッ
I DON'T LIKE THIS ANY MORE THAN YOU DO! IF THIS WEREN'T MY JOB, I'D CRUSH YOUR SOUL INTO PIECES AND FEED IT TO THE KOI IN THE TAMA RIVER!
WHA—?
AND AMANO-KUN! THIS IS YOUR *JOB!*
ONLY CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP JUST BECAUSE THEY "CAN'T DO IT"!
ヒッ
WHIP
NOT HAVING A SOUL DOES NOT GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO MAKE LIGHT OF THE REAL WORLD!
YOU ONLY RUN AWAY LIKE THAT BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE STOMACH TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO BEAT DIFFICULT LEVELS!
THE BOTH OF YOU HAVE REMOVED THE CHOICE OF "TRYING HARDER" FROM YOUR FLOWCHART!
Peh
YOU'RE THE WORST!
THE LOWEST OF THE LOW!

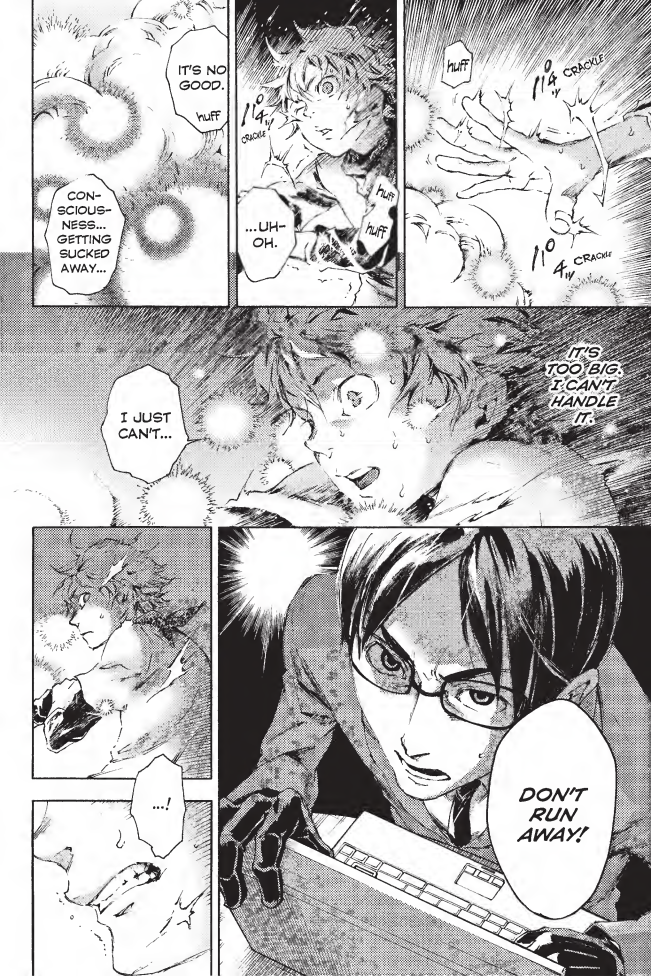

I'M THE ONE WHO CAN'T DEAL WITH...
POW
...THIS?
...
JUST FELT RIGHT.
...WHAT THE HELL?
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO TAKE THAT FROM YOU?

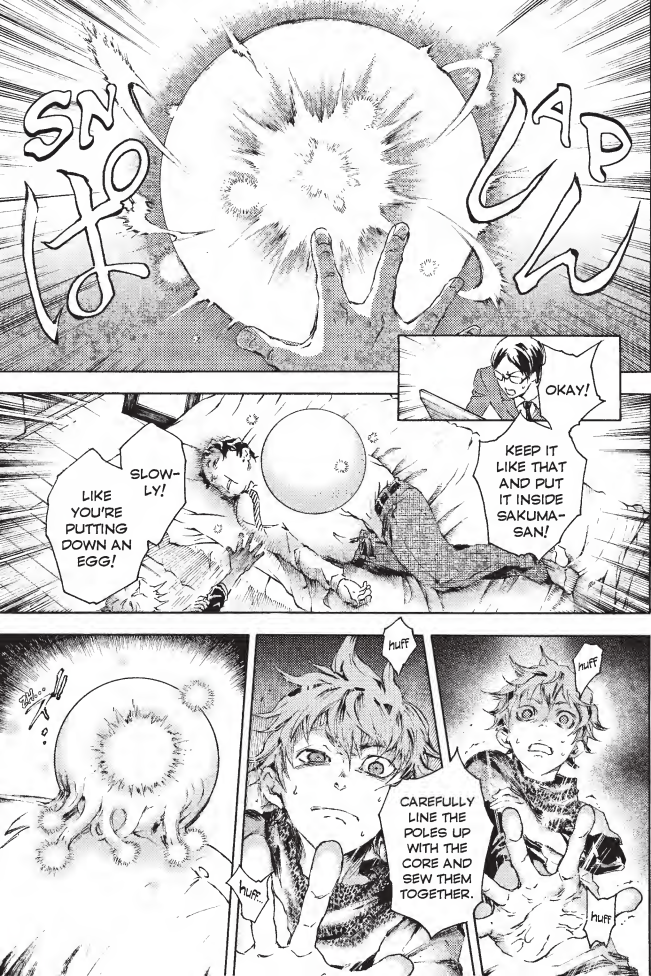

SO LET'S DO IT THEN.
ゴトン
KA-THUNK
ゴトン
KA-THUNK
OKAY.

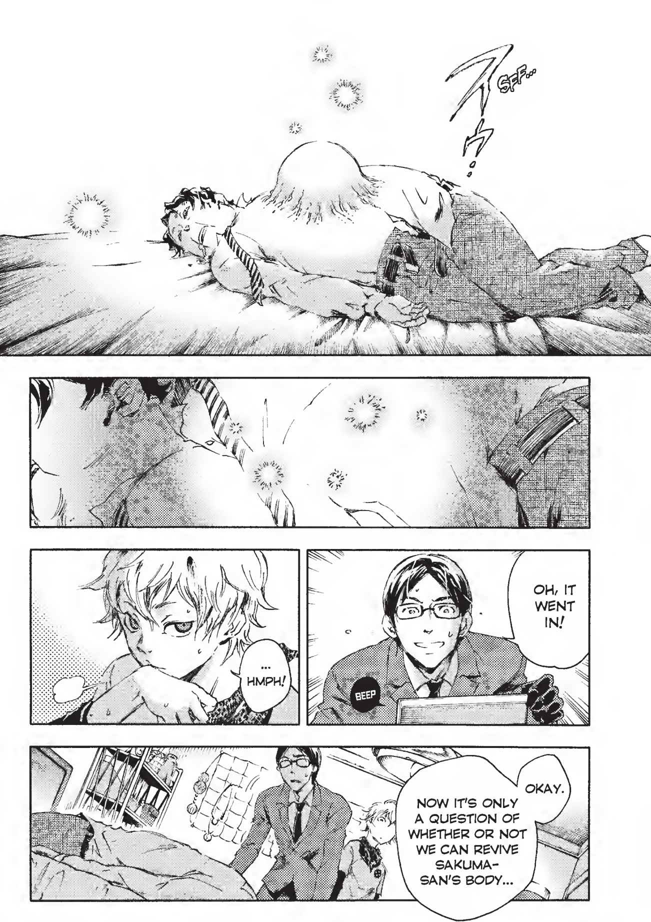

ALL RIGHT, LET'S DO THIS WHILE THE BODY IS FRESH.
AMANO-KUN.
ARE YOU READY?
...I GUESS.
I CAN GO ANYTIME.
ALL RIGHT, THEN, KANZAKI-SAN.
AS YOU WISHED, YOU WILL DIE,
AS FAR AS ANYONE ELSE IS CONCERNED.
...
glance
チラ
...UGH...
PUT MY SOUL IN HIM...?
NO... WAIT.
I NEED TO PREPARE MYSELF EMOTIONALLY...
urp
TOO BAD. I ALREADY HAVE YOUR SOUL'S PERMISSION.

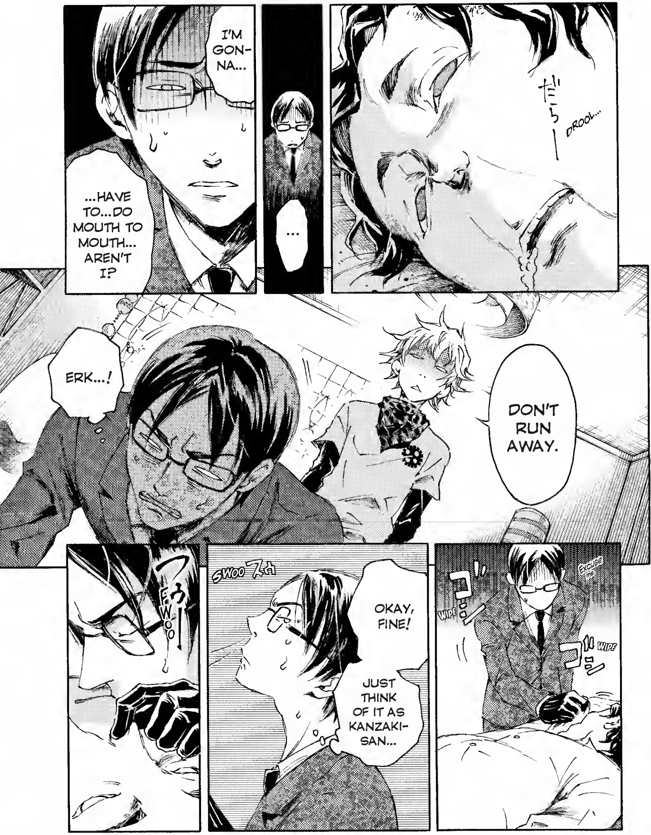

ZH...
N...
ZH
ZH
...NO!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
YOU WILL LIVE.
WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.

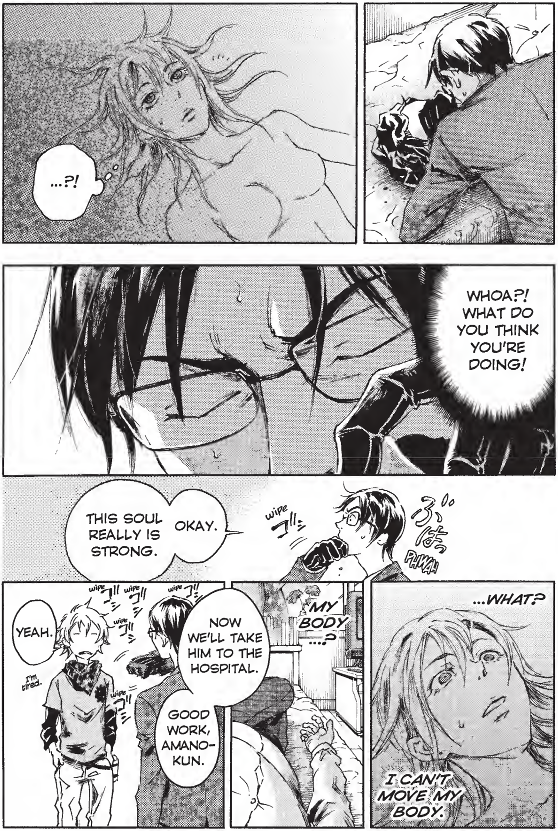

GLOW
...!
IT'S HUGE!
DON'T FREEZE IT INTO A PSYCHOLITH, AMANO-KUN!
DON'T LET ITS LIGHT GO OUT.

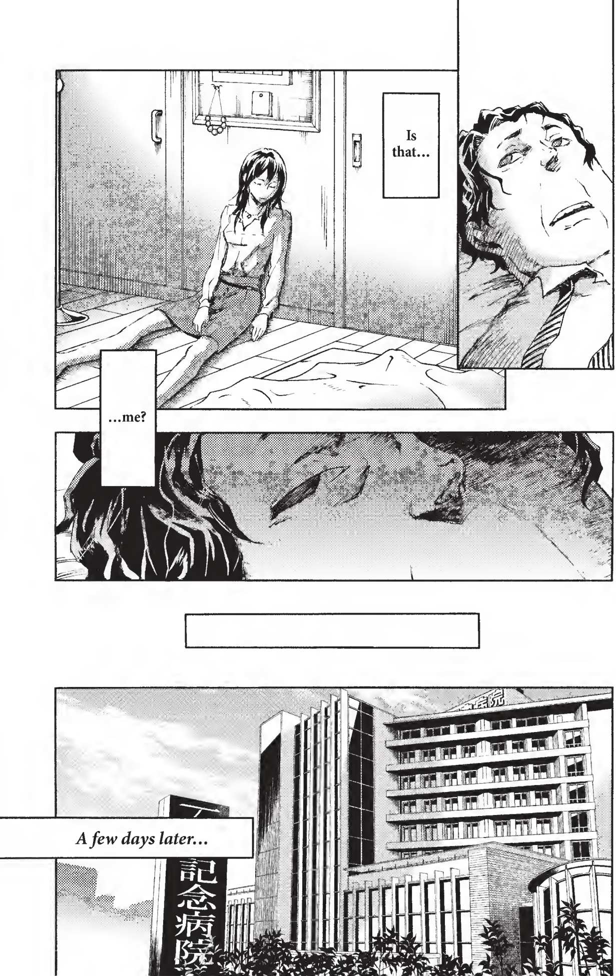

huff
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
huff
huff
...UH-OH.
IT'S NO GOOD.
huff
CONSCIOUSNESS... GETTING SUCKED AWAY...
IT'S TOO BIG. I CAN'T HANDLE IT.
I JUST CAN'T...
DON'T RUN AWAY!
...!

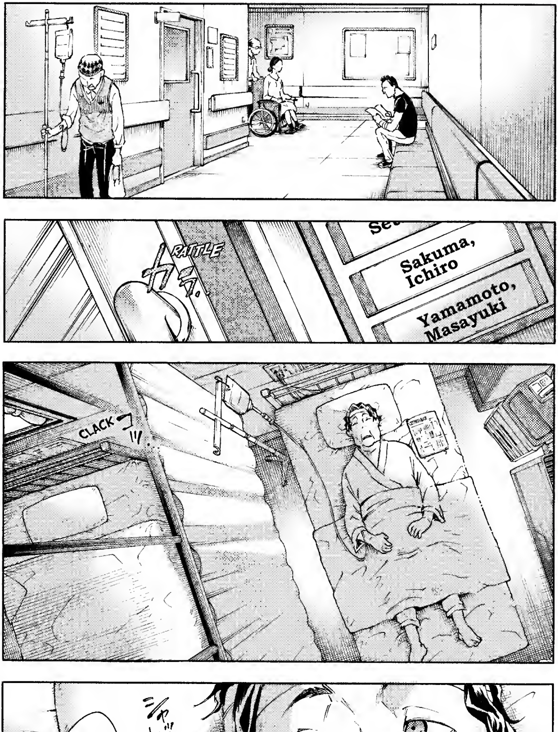

SNAP
OKAY!
KEEP IT LIKE THAT AND PUT IT INSIDE SAKUMA-SAN!
SLOWLY!
LIKE YOU'RE PUTTING DOWN AN EGG!
huff
huff
huff
CAREFULLY LINE THE POLES UP WITH THE CORE AND SEW THEM TOGETHER.
huff...
ZH...

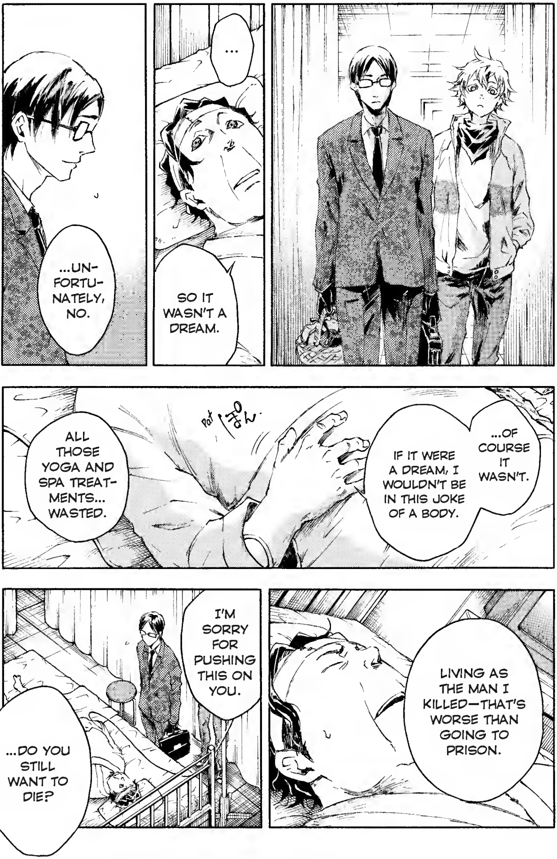

スゥ…
SFF...
OH, IT WENT IN!
BEEP
... HMPH!
OKAY.
NOW IT'S ONLY A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT WE CAN REVIVE SAKUMA-SAN'S BODY...

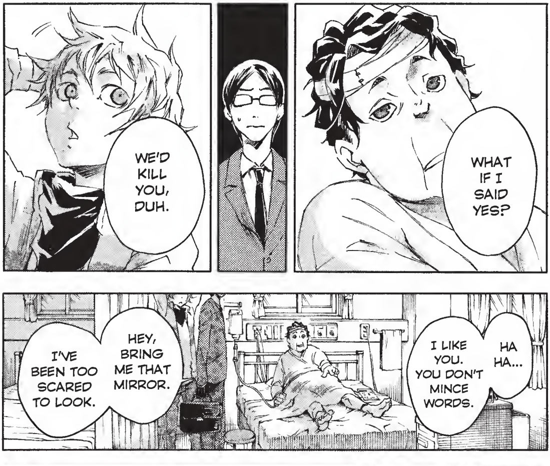

だらー
DROOL...
...
I'M GONNA...
...HAVE TO...DO MOUTH TO MOUTH... AREN'T I?
DON'T RUN AWAY.
ERK...!
ゴシ
WIPE
Excuse me
ゴシ
WIPE
SWOO スゥ
OKAY, FINE!
JUST THINK OF IT AS KANZAKI-SAN...
フゥ
FWOO

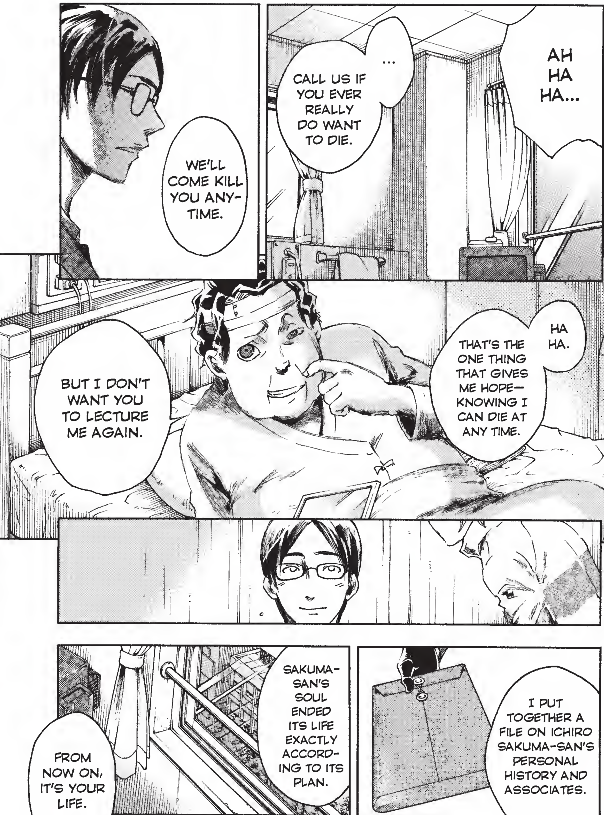

...?!
WHOA?! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!
ぷはっ
PHWAH
wipe ゴシ
OKAY.
THIS SOUL REALLY IS STRONG.
...WHAT?
I CAN'T MOVE MY BODY.
MY BODY ...?
NOW WE'LL TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL.
GOOD WORK, AMANO-KUN.
wipe ゴシ wipe ゴシ wipe ゴシ wipe ゴシ wipe ゴシ
YEAH.
I'm tired.

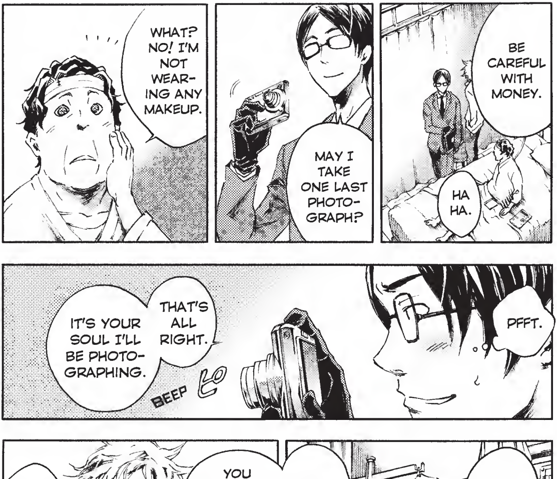

Is that...
...me?
A few days later...
記念病院

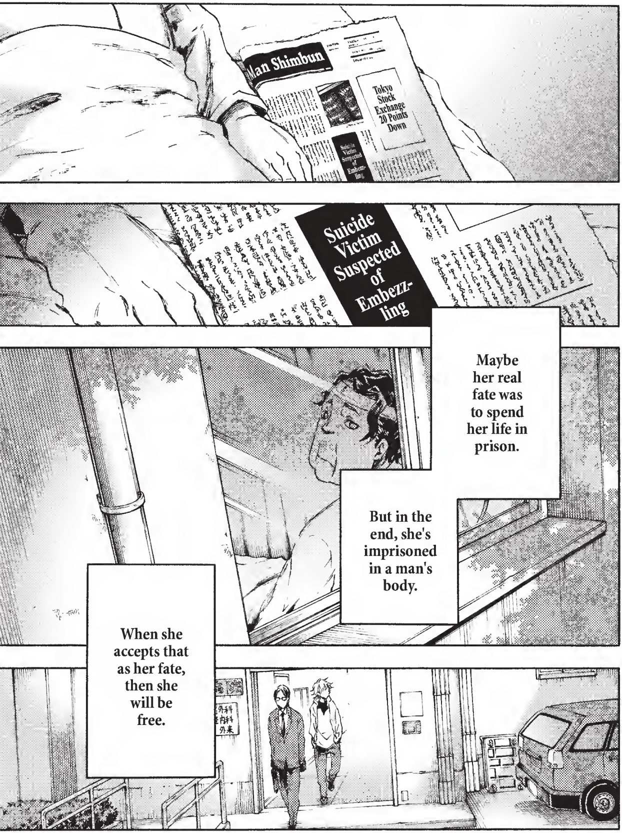

Se
Sakuma, Ichiro
Yamamoto, Masayuki
カラ
RATTLE
コツ
CLACK
シャ
fsh...!!?
...!


...
SO IT WASN'T A DREAM.
...UNFORTUNATELY, NO.
...OF COURSE IT WASN'T.
IF IT WERE A DREAM, I WOULDN'T BE IN THIS JOKE OF A BODY.
pat ぽん.
ALL THOSE YOGA AND SPA TREATMENTS... WASTED.
LIVING AS THE MAN I KILLED—THAT'S WORSE THAN GOING TO PRISON.
I'M SORRY FOR PUSHING THIS ON YOU.
...DO YOU STILL WANT TO DIE?

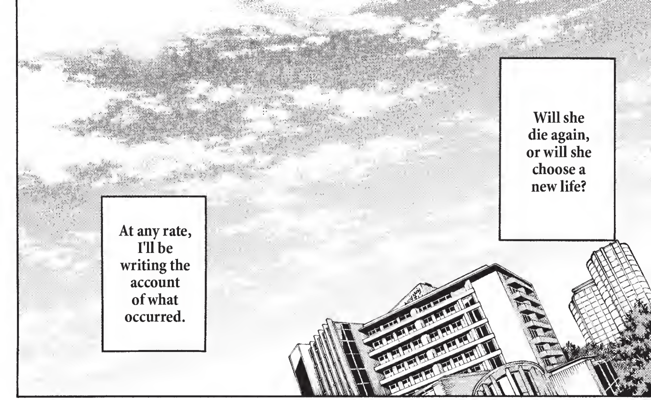

WHAT IF I SAID YES?
WE'D KILL YOU, DUH.
HA HA...
I LIKE YOU. YOU DON'T MINCE WORDS.
HEY, BRING ME THAT MIRROR.
I'VE BEEN TOO SCARED TO LOOK.
...
I WANNA DIE.
...HEH HEH.
HEH...
AH HA HA HA.

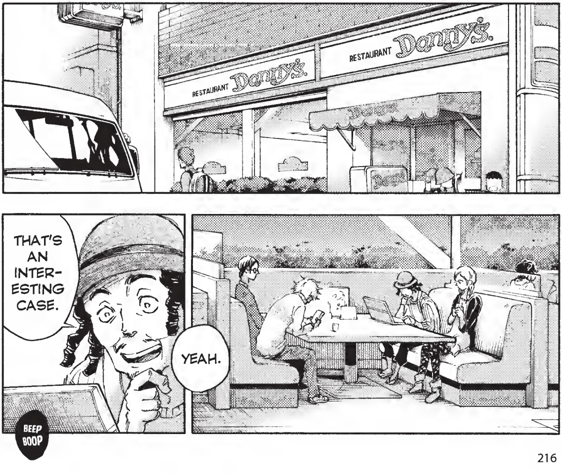

AH HA HA...
...
CALL US IF YOU EVER REALLY DO WANT TO DIE.
WE'LL COME KILL YOU ANYTIME.
HA HA.
THAT'S THE ONE THING THAT GIVES ME HOPE—KNOWING I CAN DIE AT ANY TIME.
BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO LECTURE ME AGAIN.
I PUT TOGETHER A FILE ON ICHIRO SAKUMA-SAN'S PERSONAL HISTORY AND ASSOCIATES.
SAKUMA-SAN'S SOUL ENDED ITS LIFE EXACTLY ACCORDING TO ITS PLAN.
FROM NOW ON, IT'S YOUR LIFE.

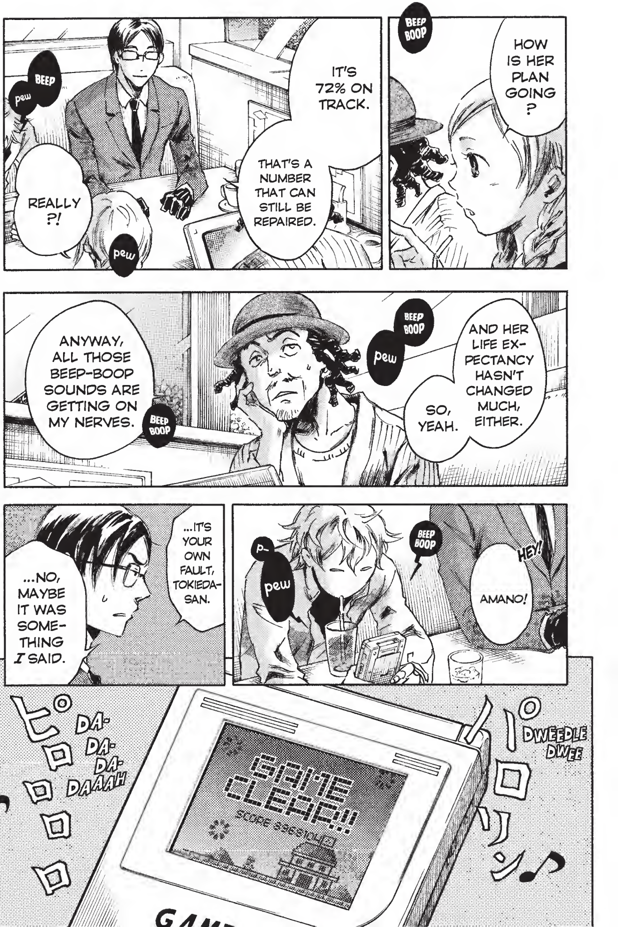

BE CAREFUL WITH MONEY.
HA HA.
MAY I TAKE ONE LAST PHOTOGRAPH?
WHAT? NO! I'M NOT WEARING ANY MAKEUP.
PFFT.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT'S YOUR SOUL I'LL BE PHOTOGRAPHING.
BEEP ピ
WELL, TAKE CARE.
OH, RIGHT.
YOU SHOULD START TALKING MORE LIKE A GUY.
YOU'RE CREEPY.
I KNOW, OKAY!
lan Shimbu

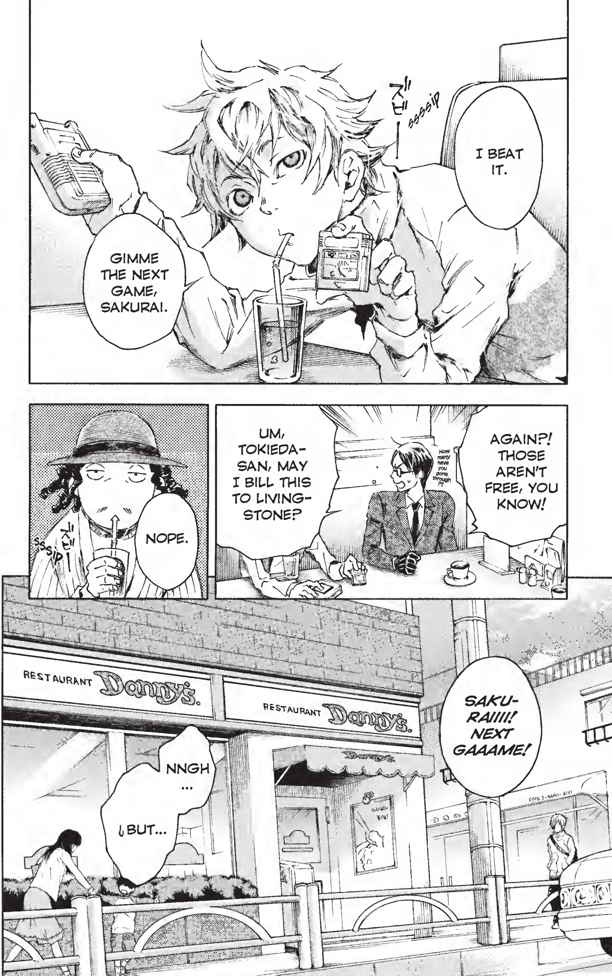

Man Shimbun
Tokyo Stock Exchange 20 Points Down
Suicide Victim Suspected of Embezzling
Suicide Victim Suspected of Embezz-ling
Maybe her real fate was to spend her life in prison.
But in the end, she's imprisoned in a man's body.
When she accepts that as her fate, then she will be free.

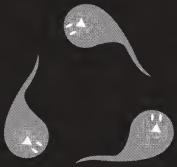
SIGN (TOP): Hospital SIGN (BOTTOM): Surgery, Internal Medicine, Outpatients


Will she die again, or will she choose a new life?
At any rate, I'll be writing the account of what occurred.


RESTAURANT Danny's
RESTAURANT Danny's
THAT'S AN INTERESTING CASE.
YEAH.
BEEP BOOP


BEEP BOOP
HOW IS HER PLAN GOING?
IT'S 72% ON TRACK.
THAT'S A NUMBER THAT CAN STILL BE REPAIRED.
BEEP
pew
REALLY?!
pew
BEEP BOOP
pew
AND HER LIFE EXPECTANCY HASN'T CHANGED MUCH, EITHER.
SO, YEAH.
ANYWAY, ALL THOSE BEEP-BOOP SOUNDS ARE GETTING ON MY NERVES.
BEEP BOOP
HEY!
AMANO!
BEEP BOOP
p-
pew
...IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT, TOKIEDA-SAN.
...NO, MAYBE IT WAS SOMETHING I SAID.
パロリン♪
DWEEDLE DWEE
GAME CLEAR!!
SCORE
ピロロロロ
DA-DA-DA-DAAAH
♪
GAM


ssssip
I BEAT IT.
GIMME THE NEXT GAME, SAKURAI.
AGAIN?! THOSE AREN'T FREE, YOU KNOW!
How many have you gone through?!
UM, TOKIEDA-SAN, MAY I BILL THIS TO LIVINGSTONE?
NOPE.
sssip
RESTAURANT Danny's
RESTAURANT Danny's
Danny's
SAKURAIIII! NEXT GAAAME!
NNGH...
BUT...



Hello and good afternoon. I am Jinsei Kataoka, the manga artist for *Livingstone*. Thank you very much for picking up this book.

Living and dying are startlingly serious things, and I feel like that's exactly what makes them so hilarious. Tomohiro "Nice Guy" Maekawa-san's theatre troupe performed this story as a play, and it had various perspectives on life and death. I found it very thought-provoking. I don't know if I'm doing a good job, or if I did a good job, but I hope that, despite my lack of experience, I manage to pursue and express the humor in life and death.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to those who helped with this manga: the character designer, Kazuma Kondō-kun; my editors, K-san, F-san, I-san; the production staff who stuck with me through my strict schedule; and Kawase-san who designed the super awesome cover.

Jinsei Kataoka

Translation Notes

Won't be needing the shoe, page 136

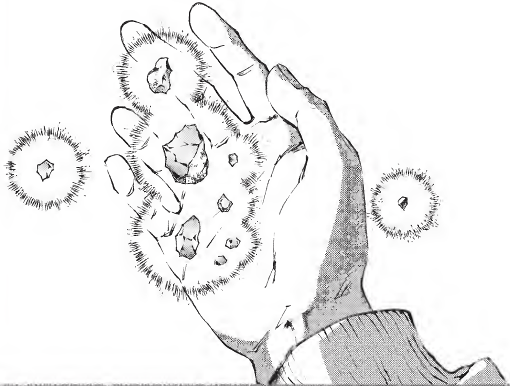
While this woman might simply be referring to the fact that dead people don't care much about footwear, she may also be alluding to the Japanese traditional belief that ghosts don't have feet. Therefore, giving one a shoe would be quite silly, and perhaps somewhat insensitive.

Absconding agency, page 146

In Japan, there are agencies that help people disappear without a trace. These agencies are especially helpful for women who need to get away from someone who might hurt them, such as a stalker or a violent husband or ex-husband.

Like how you took off that shoe, page 148

In this scene, this woman's transition to her next life is likened to the ritual of removing one's shoes. What he is actually referring to is the custom of removing one's shoes before entering a home, a common practice in many East Asian countries. The entrance to many Japanese homes is raised higher than the entryway, so this is why Amano also calls it a "step up."



Tokieda's favorite drink, page 13

While we can't identify all the ingredients in this concoction, we know it contains cola, sweet potato shōchū, and ponzu sauce. Shōchū is a type of Japanese liquor, in this case distilled from sweet potatoes. It's strong, but not as strong as whiskey or vodka. Ponzu is a citrus-based sauce made from vinegar, rice wine, bonito flakes, seaweed, and citrus juice. All those flavors combined with whatever else he put in the mix are sure to leave a lasting impression.

New Year's cards, page 69

The holiday season is a time for sending greeting cards, and it's no different in Japan. But in Japan, the biggest holiday is the New Year, so that's the time everyone sends and receives cards from their friends. Apparently Sakurai-san only receives New Year's cards in the form of junk mail.

Y.K. Livingstone, page 121

Y.K. stands for *yūgen kaisha*, which means "limited company" and is a type of limited company that existed in Japan until 2006, when they were replaced by *gōdō gaisha*, which are similar to American LLCs. This series started in 2009, so it would seem that Tokieda has not updated his signage in quite some time.

The Children's Limbo, page 122

The Children's Limbo, or *Sai-no-Kawara*, is a Japanese superstition about where children go when they die before their parents. Because they caused their parents so much pain by preceding them in death, they must pay for their lack of filial piety by building altars of stone on the bank of the Sanzu River (the river between this life and the next). Theoretically, once the altar is complete, they will have paid their debt, but before they can finish, a demon comes along and knocks the altar down, causing them to have to rebuild again and again. Thus, the term "sai-no-kawara" has also come to refer to long and futile efforts. Fortunately for the children, a Buddhist deity named Jizō will rescue them from their plight, but Sakurai may not be so lucky.

Livingstone volume 1 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Translator: Alethea Nibley & Athena Nibley
Lettering: Evan Hayden
Editing: Ajani Oloye
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